

Utah Fights to Decriminalize Polygamy

BY KENNEDY WILLIAMS

The practice of polygamy has been frowned upon since the very beginning of basic law and cultural norms in the United States. However, the state of Utah is currently fighting to decriminalize polygamy among consenting adults by reducing the penalty from a felony that comes with five to fifteen years in prison to a slight infraction on par with a traffic ticket. On Tuesday, February 25th, the Utah state senate voted unanimously to pass the Republican-sponsored bill effectively. It then moved on to the Utah House of representatives, where it was passed on Wednesday. From there, it will move to the governor of Utah for the final decision.

Utah is nationally known for its dense population of Mormon citizens, hence its constant push on changing these laws that counter the traditional practice of the Mormon religion. Seventy-five to eighty percent of practicing Mormons are not members of polygamist households as the church disavowed polygamy in 1890. Still, there remains a large amount of Utah's population that does take part in plural marriage as a traditional practice. Apart from allowing citizens the freedom to define what marriage and family mean to them, this law will also help victims of abuse who belong to polygamous households to come forward without the fear of prosecution, according to Republican Senator Diedre Henderson.

While polygamy is seen as immoral by the general population of the United States, many citizens of Utah argue that plural marriage is a deep-rooted practice of their culture. Polygamist protestors hold up signs saying, "I'm a husband, a father, and a lover. Not a felon," and, "We are consenting adults!" In a different setting, Brooke Shedd is a primary example as she tells her story of the perfect polygamous relationship along with partners Adam Lyons and Jane Shalakhova on *This Morning*. Shedd says that polygamy is often portrayed in the media solely as a negative thing. In reality, "It is perfectly acceptable for two men and a woman to be together, or for four people, or five people, or whatever." These arguments have shifted the mindset of politicians, much like the move for the legalization of gay marriage in 2015. Protestors are taking the frowned-upon practice, personalizing it, and really making politicians think about why plural marriage is a crime.

This bill has been in the works since late August of 2019 when a columnist for the Salt Lake Tribune, Robert Gehrke, commented, "Utah should decriminalize polygamy, but legally it can't." Gehrke traveled around the United States to learn more about polygamy and specifically why polygamist families were pulling their children out of school. According to Gehrke, criminalizing polygamy only makes these communities more insular. These various arguments for polygamy and the dense population of polygamist families in Utah make the likelihood of the passing of this bill very high. Whether this will have a positive or negative effect on the community is unclear at this time.

Poisoned Ivy League

BY ALEXANDRIA GOSEN

Prestigious Ivy League schools Harvard and Yale are under investigation with the US Education Department for failing to report millions of foreign donations in their taxes. This investigation is just another on the larger scale of investigations multiple US departments have been conducting on Ivy League schools. This particular investigation, however, is beginning to raise questions about how reliant these schools are on foreign funding.

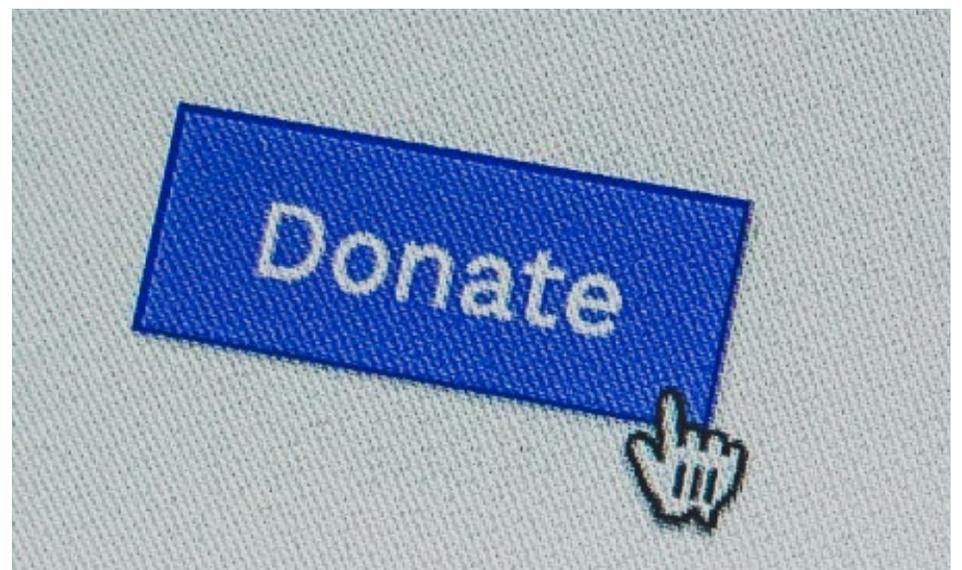
According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the schools have yet to respond to the education department. The same article paraphrases the education department's description of said schools, reading, "... Higher education institutions in the US, in a document reviewed by the Journal, as 'multibillion-dollar, multinational enterprises using opaque foundations, foreign campuses, and other sophisticated legal structures to generate revenue.'"

It is a law that universities are to report to the education department foreign contracts and gifts that total, individually or together, \$250,000 or more in the calendar year. These universities in question are outright accused of soliciting money from foreign organizations that are known to be hostile to the United States. The accusers claim this is a reason for concern due to the risk of research theft, a spread of propaganda, and benefiting other governments.

Along with this investigation, recently, the chairman of Harvard's chemistry department was arrested on charges of lying about millions of dollars the Chinese donated to the program. At the same time, the US also disbursed a grand \$15 million to fund his research. This is the match that lit the fire. The professor's arrest is what led the education department to the scandal.

The education department also reported that Yale failed to report \$375 million in foreign funding. Yale, in fact, did not file any reports between the three years of 2014-17. The education department is now requesting from both schools financial reports regarding contributions from the following: Saudi Arabia, China, Peking University's Yenching Academy, the National University of Singapore, Qatar, Huawei Technologies Co., and ZTE Corp. of China, the Kaspersky Lab and Skolkovo Foundation of Russia, and many more.

It is said that the Trump administration and other authorities involved fears the repercussions of collaborating with China and other rivals. They claim that they are using their funding as an edge to gain knowledge that could potentially narrow their economic and/or military gaps with the United States.



Harvard & Yale in trouble of foreign donations CREDIT: Victoria Turcios