



Conservatives wonder how N.J. Attorney General Paula Dow sided against the Christians

By Paul Mulshine/The Star Ledger

April 01, 2010, 5:02AM



Amanda Brown/The Star-Ledger

Paula Dow, New Jersey's attorney general, speaks in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee during her confirmation hearings in the Statehouse in Trenton.

Imagine you were some naive, trusting, pro-faith, pro-family type who voted for **Chris Christie** last year on the assumption he shared your views.

And imagine you watched as he appointed a Democrat from Essex County to the single most important post in his new administration.

And imagine some cynical soul had said to you, "Don't hold your breath waiting to find out she's a loony left-winger."

How long would you have had to go without oxygen?

Not all that long, it turns out. Just 20 days. **Paula Dow** took the oath of office on Feb. 23. On March 15, she filed a brief adopting the position of some of the looniest left-wingers on both coasts against a group of conservative Christians.

The case is called **Christian Legal Society v. Martinez**. It arises out of a controversy in San Francisco, that beautiful-but-batty city by the sea.

The case began when the authorities at Hastings Law School, which is part of the publicly funded University of

California, denied recognition to a group of law students professing Christian beliefs on the grounds that the group discriminates on the basis of religion. This seemed to make no sense. The school had granted recognition to other religious-based student groups, such as the Hastings Association of Muslim Law Students and the Hastings Jewish Law Students Association. Also recognized were associations based on race and ethnicity, such as La Raza Law Students Association; the Chinese Law & Culture Society; the Black Law Students and so on.

The society sued and the case worked its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. At this point you're probably asking yourself the same question I'm asking myself: What the heck does this have to do with New Jersey?

Dow's office didn't return my call. So I can't tell you. But I did read the friend-of-the-court brief in which she came out on the **same side of the case as Martha Coakley**. Yes, that **Martha Coakley**, the attorney general who proved herself to be too left-wing for even the people of Massachusetts in that recent U.S. Senate race won by Scott Brown.

They say politics makes strange bedfellows, but I never thought I'd see the Christie administration in the sack with that crowd. Nor did any of the other conservatives in New Jersey. **John Tomicki** of the League of American Families called Dow's position "extremely disappointing" and speculated that she made it without Christie's consent.

That's a good question, and it's one that the Christie crowd seems to be ducking. I couldn't get a comment out of them either.

But conservatives are commenting all over New Jersey. Dow's decision to intervene in that California case is in direct contrast to her decision not to intervene in a suit to stop Obamacare. The AGs of 14 Republican-ruled states have joined in a suit to stop the Democratic health care reform plan on states' rights grounds.

Not New Jersey. Christie has been quoted as saying that he won't decide whether to join the suit until "I get fully informed by my attorney general and by my commissioner of health." That would be **Poonam Alaigh**, who in 2006 contributed to the campaign of a key sponsor of Obamacare, U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone of Monmouth County.

Are you shocked to find such characters in the Christie cabinet? Not me. I'd be shocked to find a conservative in there. And that is problematic for property tax reform, the issue that is once again in the news thanks to Christie's bizarre budget proposal for next year.

For some reason as inexplicable as his choice of Dow, Christie proposed a school funding formula for next year that guts property tax relief to those very same suburban voters who picked him in the GOP primary last year because of his promises to cut taxes.

Your property taxes are likely to soar next year. But the Guv has hinted we'll finally see property tax relief once he gets to name new justices to the state Supreme Court. He has the chance to replace four in his term, and that's a majority.

Well, he can't clone Paula Dow. But having seen him entrust the most important post in his administration to a flaming liberal, should we expect any difference in those court picks?

I certainly don't. I expect Christie to follow in the tradition of all those moderate Republican governors over the years who have managed the difficult trick of finding judicial nominees to the left of those chosen by Democrats. The chief justice who forced the income tax on us in 1976, **Richard Hughes**, was picked by a GOP gov, as was chief justice **Deborah Poritz**, forever famed for the infamous Torricelli Switcheroo, among other abominations.

So don't hold your breath waiting for Chris Christie to deliver on his promises of cutting taxes. The world record is 11 minutes and 35 seconds. You've got almost four years to go.

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