

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

March 8, 2010 at 7:22pm

Conservatives pray with 'Liberal' trading cards

by Adelle M. Banks by Religion News Service



WASHINGTON -- Attention Californians: Your governor has just been adopted. Next up: your bleeding-heart senator, Barbara Boxer, and not far behind, her Democratic colleague, Dianne Feinstein.

Not by a new set of parents, mind you, but rather an army of conservative prayer warriors committed to restoring "poor leaders to right thinking."

The Republican governor's alleged sins? Supporting abortion funding and "imposing same-sex 'marriage' " on the Golden State while allowing "out-of-control liberal spending."

Boxer, a Democrat, is cited as a "radical environmentalist" and embracing "ultraliberal" positions. Feinstein "encourages closing Guantanamo" and shipping terror suspects to the Golden State.

And that's not even mentioning San Francisco's Nancy Pelosi, the House speaker.

Or Oprah Winfrey's sit-down with a transgender man who had a baby, Hillary Clinton's support of global abortion rights, Warren Buffet's "open marriage" or New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's support of gun control.

For the influential Christian law firm Liberty Counsel, the new "Adopt a Liberal" trading cards puts the power of prayer -- quite literally -- in the palm of conservatives' hands.

Last fall, the Florida-based firm posted a list of about a dozen liberals with similar transgressions on its Web site. But founder Mathew Staver and his colleagues thought there were enough to, well, make trades.

Now, for a mere \$20, you can swap former Vice President Al Gore for HBO's Bill Maher. Or Huffington Post founder Arianna Huffington for the now-Democratic Sen. Arlen Specter.

"We created the card deck with 51 cards so it's one card short of a full deck," Staver said, only half joking. The 52nd features a question mark for the "Unknown Liberal" in government, media, higher education or "other liberals of your choice."

It may be a gimmick that gets people talking, said pop culture expert Robert Thompson, but liberals should think twice before countering with their own "Adopt a Conservative" cards.

"You're putting that person in a position of ... being in this childlike need to be enlightened," said the Syracuse University professor. "There's a certain unmitigated arrogance and hubris involved."

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The 51 standing in the need of prayer range from the Obama administration (President "Barack Hussein Obama" and chief of staff Rahm Emanuel) to members of Congress (House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid) to Hollywood types (Anne Hathaway and Michael Moore) and pundits (MSNBC's holy trinity of Chris Matthews, Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow).

Just four of the 51 are known Republicans (Schwarzenegger, Maine Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins and Illinois Senate candidate Mark Kirk, who's misidentified as an already elected senator).

"We encourage you to seek the Lord's guidance on how to pray for your liberal(s), always allowing God to temper your prayer with his love and mercy," the cards say. "... In fact, we fully expect that many of our adoptees will 'graduate' from this prayer program with vivid testimonies of God having changed their lives and worldviews!"

Some of the designated liberals in the "prayer-in-action" program actually welcomed the designation, though some cautioned to be careful what you pray for.

When veteran political pundit Alan Colmes learned of the campaign last fall, he actually asked to be included, Staver said. Liberty Counsel was more than happy to make some room. "Actually requested inclusion in the Adopt a Liberal list and asked for prayer!" his card says.

"He was disappointed that he wasn't part of the original list," said Staver, dean of the law school at Liberty University. "He looked at it as a badge of honor to be on the liberal list."

The card deck is certainly a kinder, gentler alternative to prayer initiatives of more extreme conservatives who have prayed, among other things, for God to smite the president and his congressional allies.

Along with the deck of cards, donors get a free "Have you adopted a liberal today?" bumper sticker, although Staver cautioned that praying for liberals is not for the faint of heart.

"The Scriptures don't say to pray for those who you agree with only," Staver noted. "But to pray for those in leadership."

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