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HUMANIST

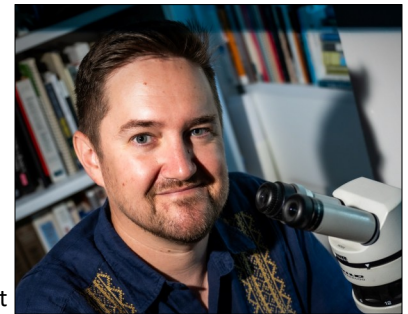
Monthly

A Publication of the Capital District Humanist Society
Connecting the Secular Humanist Community of Upstate New York, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont

Sunday, May 3rd, 2026

In Person at 12:30 PM and Online at 1:00 PM

The Wisdom of the Ants



Scott Solomon

What lessons can humans learn from ants? These incredible insects have already solved many of the problems we face in modern society. Ant colonies can contain more than 5 million individuals housed inside densely packed, underground nests yet they can survive outbreaks of deadly infectious diseases. They accomplish complex tasks such as building structures equivalent to our tallest skyscrapers, yet they do so without construction blueprints or a leadership hierarchy. Thousands of ants travel back and forth on narrow pathways as they search for food and carry it back to their nests; yet ants don't experience traffic jams. Some ants are farmers, growing fungi on a scale that rivals our modern industrial farms, yet ants grow their crops without the use of pesticides and can still avoid devastating pest outbreaks. In this talk, join a biologist who has studied ants for more than two decades on a quest to follow the ancient advice of King Solomon: "Look to the ant... consider her ways and be wise."

Scott Solomon is a Teaching Professor in BioSciences at Rice University and a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History. He has a Ph.D. in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior from the University of Texas at Austin where his research examined the evolutionary origins of leafcutter ants in the Amazon Basin. He has taught field biology courses in Colorado, Belize, and Tanzania and hosted educational trips to destinations including the Galapagos Islands, Peru, Baja, and Tahiti. His writing and photography have appeared in publications such as National Geographic, NBC News, Slate, Aeon, Nautilus, and Wired. He has written the book *Future Humans: Inside the Science of Our Continuing Evolution*, which was included on the 2017 Best Book List by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He co-wrote and co-produced a three-part docuseries for CuriosityStream called 'Becoming Martian' and is the host of the podcast 'Wild World with Scott Solomon'. His most recent book is *Becoming Martian: How Living in Space Will Change Our Bodies and Minds*. Dr. Solomon is a Fellow of The Explorers Club, an Associate Editor of the Journal of Tropical Ecology, and a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Sigma Xi Scientific Research Honor Society, and the Society for the Study of Evolution.

The program will take place both in person (at 12:30 PM) and online (at 1:00 PM) via Zoom. The in-person event will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, NY. It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be available at the in-person meeting before the speaker's presentation, but **PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN BEVERAGE**. Current paid CDHS members will automatically receive an invitation to the online meeting via email. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please see the paragraph below to request an email invitation to attend.

ANYONE WHO IS NOT A CURRENT PAID MEMBER of CDHS can attend. Send an email request to: CDHS.Albany@gmail.com. Please send the request several days prior to the meeting.

The Capital District Humanist Society provides a supportive community for exchanging ideas, heightening our knowledge of the world and ourselves, fostering moral and ethical growth, and promoting the principles of secular humanism. CDHS is a member organization for people with humanist values. Our values include commitment to free inquiry, rational thought, lifelong education, democracy, social concern, and fellowship.

Capital District Humanist Society, Inc.

Established 1986

Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety>



CDHS is affiliated with:

The American Humanist Association (AHA)

Center for Inquiry (CSI)

Humanists International (HI)

The Secular Coalition for America (SCA)

On Sunday, June 14th, 2026, 12:30 PM (In Person) and 1:00 PM (Online)

The Capital District Humanist Society Presents:

Juneteenth: Celebrating Freedom in Texas and Beyond

The date June 19, 1865, has been celebrated by Black Texans since Reconstruction. Known today as “Juneteenth,” the holiday commemorates the arrival of Union soldiers to Galveston, Texas, and the liberation of the enslaved population. Professor Tyina Steptoe will discuss the history of Juneteenth celebrations – including the recent adoption of June 19 as a federal holiday – and common misconceptions regarding the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.



Tyina Steptoe

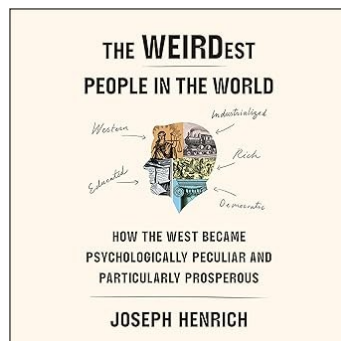
Tyina (pronounced Ta-wa-na) Steptoe hails from Houston, Texas. She holds a Ph.D. in History and an M.A. in Afro-American Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She also earned a B.S. in Radio-Television-Film and a B.A. in History from the University of Texas at Austin. Currently, she is an associate professor of history at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

Her work focuses on race, gender, and culture in the United States. Her award-winning book, Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City (University of California Press, 2016), examines how the migration of Creoles of color, ethnic Mexicans, and black East Texans complicated notions of race in Houston between the 1920s and 1960s. Her latest book is Jim Crow: Voices from a Century of Struggle. Dr. Steptoe also hosts a weekly radio program called “Soul Stories” on 91.3 KXCI Tucson. The show explores the roots and branches of rhythm and blues music.

This program will take place both in person (at 12:30 PM) and online (at 1:00 PM) via Zoom. The in-person event will be held at Pinnacle Living at 45 Forts Ferry Road in Latham, NY. It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be available at the in-person meeting before the speaker’s presentation. Current paid CDHS members will automatically receive an invitation to the on-line meeting via email. If you are not a current paid CDHS member, please see page 1 to request an email invitation to attend.

Reminder: July Meeting — Sunday, July 12, 2026

CDHS Book Group is reading *The WEIRDest People In The World: How The West Became Psychologically Peculiar And Particularly Prosperous* by Joseph Henrich. The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays.



Contact Frank Robinson if you would like to join the spirited and informative discussion.

CDHS Executive Council

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Room Arrangements	Frank Robinson
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RECAP OF OUR APRIL SPEAKER'S TALK

(by Frank Robinson)

Mark Ferrara is a professor at SUNY Oneonta, speaking about his book, Sacred Bliss: A Spiritual History of Cannabis.

He began by suggesting that America is in the midst of a revolutionary experiment -- many states (now including New York) having legalized cannabis for recreational as well as medical use, with a regulatory system for distribution. (A system which, in New York, is quite typically fubar — FSR.)

"Cannabis" is a plant, commonly referred to as "marijuana" or "pot", which people have long used for mind-altering purposes. The killjoy federal government still considers it illegal, but that doesn't seem to matter much anymore, baby.

Ferrara noted that there are other substances people have used for similar purposes, many of them sending folks on trips of greater depths and/or durations. In comparison, cannabis is fairly mild stuff; it's not apparently physically addictive and apparently has never (directly) killed anyone. Pot is a "kinder, gentler" alternative to stuff like mescaline or LSD.

Ferrara's book goes around the world tracing its role in culture, used for some medical but mainly spiritual purposes. Particularly in the context of some eastern religions, like Hinduism or Buddhism, we heard talk about "the self and god are one," "the unity of all being," and asceticism, renunciation, relinquishing material things. You know, that kind of stuff.

He did bring in psychologist Abraham Maslow's concept of a "peak experience," a transcendent moment, supervening ordinary everyday consciousness. Something a little pot can induce. But, meantime, he suggested that what one should really aim for is not a momentary peak but rather consciousness on a generally higher level. And Maslow didn't actually see a difference between a substance-induced peak experience and one occurring, perhaps, responding to natural beauty. Ferrara also said that one experience does not a religious life make, but it can put you on a higher path. So, while after a peak experience, one does return to normal life, you can "linger" at the higher plateau.

But people with fear of heights should beware.

A recording of this presentation can be found on the CDHS YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/M1MN5HBJKqk>.

May Social at the Waterford Canal Festival

The 40th Annual Waterford Canal Festival that celebrates the history and culture of Village of Waterford is less than a month away on Saturday, May 16, 2026.

Admission is free, and the hours are from 10:00 AM—6:00 PM. We'll be meeting for lunch at McGreivey's Restaurant (<https://www.mcgreiveys.com/>), 91 Broad Street, Waterford. Let's plan to meet there at 11:30 AM and go on to the festival from there.

If the weather is not conducive, we'll just have lunch together.



The Festival location is: Waterford Harbor, 1 Visitor Center, Tugboat Alley, Waterford, NY 12188.

There are too many activities to list in this space, but they will be available for people of all ages. So bring your children and grandchildren, friends and family.

One thing of particular interest is the *Seneca Chief*, a historic replica of the first canal boat to navigate the Erie Canal from Buffalo to New York City. It will be available on site for tours.

See website for more details: <https://waterfordcanalfestival.com/>.

Please RSVP to Dee Fuller by May 14, 2026 by email at candacelf13@gmail.com.



The Book of Exodus Needs a Rewrite

Religion is moral only if we make it so

Ed. note: CDHS member Kate Cohen graciously gave us permission to reprint her Substack article from April 7, 2026. We thank her for her quick reply to our inquiry and appreciate her generosity.



Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas have all recently passed laws requiring the Ten Commandments be posted in every classroom. If you think that smells a little unconstitutional, well, they did too. That's why the laws¹ carefully frame the Ten Commandments as a historical document rather than a religious one, in an attempt to establish deniability vis-à-vis the Establishment Clause.²

It's history, folks! You don't want children to learn history?

Sometimes these guys chuck the history argument, though, and defend their indefensible laws in a different way:

"I think our kids are just crying out for moral clarity," said State Sen. Phil King, testifying for the Texas bill. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick later praised the law for providing students with a "foundational moral compass."

Both men were appealing to the widely accepted notion that religion is a source of moral guidance. (*You don't want children to be moral?*)

But religion isn't the source of morality.

Need proof?

May I present to you the home of the Ten Commandments themselves, the Book of Exodus.

The setting is ancient Egypt, where the Israelites are enslaved and suffering under a murderous regime.

God, remembering his covenant with Abraham and hearing the pleas of the Israelites, conscripts Moses in his plan to get Pharaoh, Egypt's ruler, to let his people go.³

To prove his great power to Pharaoh, God turns a rod into a snake and water into blood and then covers the land in frogs. The Egyptian magicians at first match him spell for spell, but, failing at gnats (the third plague), they admit defeat. Still, the Lord keeps sending plagues: flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts, darkness.

Here I must emphasize: Each of these plagues works, convincing Pharaoh to free the Israelites. But then God makes Pharaoh change his mind, so he (God) can send another plague.

Finally, the big finish: the murder of every firstborn child — of Egyptians, but of prisoners, (non-Jewish) slaves, and animals too.

When the Israelites leave, God makes Pharaoh change his mind again and send the Egyptian army in pursuit. God tells Moses not to worry, he'll part the Red Sea so the Israelites can pass through, then "harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them" (14:17). He does, they do, the waters return, and of the whole Egyptian army and their horses "not one of them remained."

What's the point of this literal overkill? Is God enraged about slavery? Is he teaching people a brutal lesson about the consequences of supporting an oppressive regime?

No. He's teaching them a brutal lesson about himself.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. . . . So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses. (Exodus 14:30)

Fearing and believing — that's what it's all about. Mostly fearing:

If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you. (Exodus 15:26)

Very Vito Corleone. Very abusive father, war criminal, psychopath.

Anyone need a cup of wine? Maybe four?

So why exactly do people think that religion is the source of morality? Well, religion and morality *are* connected, just not the way we usually think.

I learned as a Jewish child — and continued to read and hear as a Jewish adult — that Exodus is about freedom from slavery, the struggle to overthrow tyrants, our collective responsibility to the oppressed.

"Gates of Freedom" was in fact the title of my childhood *haggadah* (the guidebook for the Passover celebration). In it you can find statements like, "We give thanks for the liberations of days gone by. And we pray for all those who are still bound." It quotes abolitionists. It intones: "The eternal lesson of Passover remains: Until all are free, none are truly free."

Lovely sentiment, but I'm sorry — the eternal lesson of Passover, as clearly spelled out in Exodus, is: *See how powerful I am; remember what a great favor I did for you; worship me or else.*

Every *haggadah* I've ever read, from ultra-conservative to radical feminist, downplays the gory details of Exodus, ignores the obscenity of punishing people for things you force them to do, and redirects to themes of oppression and liberation.

Why such aggressive rewriting? Modern Jews reading Exodus can see what anyone even vaguely aware of the Geneva Conventions⁴ can see. To make Passover morally palatable, they *have* to misrepresent the text's original meaning.

You could call it dishonesty; I call it progress.

Although the psycho-god of the Old Testament poses a singular challenge,⁵ Jews are not the only believers who practice what we might call ethical obfuscation.

(Continued on Page 5)

Adherents of every religion downplay or downright skip the parts of their holy texts that they find immoral. Progressive Christians ignore the parts of the Bible that forbid homosexuality or sanctify vengeance and focus on the parts that emphasize humility and compassion. Progressive Muslims ignore the parts of the Quran about slaying idolaters and focus on the parts about feeding the poor. Same with conservatives: They pick which laws to follow and how strictly.

How do these believers look at the same text and choose different paths?

By using their own, independent moral consciences.

Sometimes that means defying their church secretly. Sometimes it means trying to change it. Any religion whose moral code has evolved since its inception is even more proof that morality isn't inherent in the religion itself, but exists outside it, in people.

That's how the Episcopal Church now permits same-sex marriage and the Catholic church no longer teaches that Jews killed Jesus.

People don't get morality from religion; they bring morality to it.

After a few months, the Israelites arrived at the Sinai Desert, and God told Moses to have everybody clean themselves up and approach (but not touch⁶) the mountain. And then God issues those famous Ten Commandments — the ones that Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas all now require classrooms to post.⁷

Sort of.

If you read [Exodus 20:1–17](#) side by side with the [version mandated by state law](#), you will note some . . . edits. For instance, the third commandment that schools are required to post reads, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images."

But in the original, it goes on:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.

Apparently, even politicians eager to force their religion on everyone's kids have enough independent moral sense to leave out the part where God promises to punish people for what their great-great-grandparents did.

Morality doesn't come from religion; it comes from us. When parents ask me about raising kids without religion, that's what I tell them. It's a challenge to teach right from wrong, but that's true even with the Torah in your corner. In fact, it's probably easier to start from scratch than to have to explain to your kids why Exodus has so many dead babies in it. Or — if you're Christian — why babies are born with sin.

But religion does create a framework for *thinking* about morality; from Torah study to weekly sermons to the Pope's Easter message. Depending on the news and my mood, I might think sometimes about who is free and who isn't, what responsibility I bear to the oppressed. But on Passover — or at least the morally palatable version thereof that I have always celebrated — that's my whole job.

There's a modern seder ritual⁸ in which you recite the list of plagues in Hebrew, and as you list each one, you remove a drop from your glass of wine, symbolically tempering your celebration with acknowledgement of the suffering of the Egyptians. The ritual wine-spilling has always been one of my favorite parts, appealing as it does to my anti-sectarian, universalist sensibilities. But last year, as Israel was destroying Gaza under the banner of Jewish victimhood, I was so agitated during this moment in the seder I could hardly sit still. *We should be pouring out all our wine*, I thought. *We should be knocking over the table. We should light the room on fire.*

I can only describe it as a moment of intense moral distress.

How do we put ourselves in regular confrontation with big moral questions? How do we make ourselves pause in the headlong rush of life to think about what it means to live ethically?

That's the moral benefit religion provides: periodic opportunities to wrestle with ideas about right and wrong. Come to think of it, the Ten Commandments could fulfill this purpose beautifully.

Here let us pray: that any schoolchild who looks up and reads that "moral code" quickly figures out that they could write a better one.

1. Yes, they're all the same. Read all about the Christian "bill mill" [here](#).
2. Another benefit of the history angle: framing the Ten Commandments as a core text for our founders promotes the myth that America was founded as a Christian nation. For a thorough and thoroughly entertaining debunking of that myth, I recommend Andrew Seidel's [The Founding Myth](#).
3. "You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, I will lay my hand upon Egypt and bring my people the Israelites, company by company, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them." (Exodus 7:2–5) I use the New Revised Standard Updated Edition here and throughout, except for the part about the Ten Commandments. The King James Version has more of the vibe preferred by the Christian Nationalists.
4. Correction: Even a child can see, as mine did, that there are too many dead babies in this story.
5. Pity the *bar mitzvah* whose Torah portion is Genesis 22, in which Abraham readies his son for sacrifice. Explain *that*, my good boy!
6. "Whoever touches the mountain is to be put to death" (Exodus 19:12). Oy, this guy.
7. Litigation pending. Subscribe to [The Friendly Atheist](#) or follow the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#) for updates. For new bills in other states, type "Ten Commandments" into the handy bill tracker at [Americans United](#).
8. Here's another example of a religious update based on evolving moral sensibilities. The spilling of the wine used to be a superstitious, don't-tempt-fate sort of thing (if God sees you celebrating too much, he might punish you too). American Jews in the mid-1900s reinterpreted it as an expression of compassion for our enemies — which, as we have seen, is decidedly not a feature of the Old Testament.

TAKE ACTION FOR EARTH WEEK!

NYPIRG and its climate allies have been rallying all across New York State on an “Energy Hog” bus tour. Call Governor Hochul at (518) 474-8390 and tell her to protect our communities from AI data centers.

(Excerpted from an email from NYPIRG)

Across the country, and right here in New York, proposals to build massive data centers are popping up. AI (“artificial intelligence”) data centers run many supercomputers that require a tremendous amount of energy, zapping electricity from the public grid. And they can generate persistent, terrible noise, and other pollution. Left unregulated, these energy hogs could lead to rising air pollution, industrial use of local clean water, and skyrocketing utility bills.

But, instead of focusing on this pressing issue, the Governor is using her time to attack New York’s nation-leading Climate Law through the secretive budget process. The Governor’s plan to gut the Climate Law will exacerbate the costly climate crisis and allow big polluters and energy hogs to put their corporate profits over the public interest.

That is why New York must act to rein in the unchecked expansion of data centers and protect our communities. The state should:

- Set clear limits on where and how these mega-facilities can operate.
- Ensure that noise, air, and water pollution risks are mitigated.
- Reject attempts to repower old fossil fuel power plants to serve these centers.
- Provide for meaningful community input throughout the process.

Sincerely,

Megan Ahearn

Executive Director

NYPIRG



PS: Reporting some good news from this week, NYPIRG led the charge to pass legislation that establishes rebate programs for landscaping companies and local governments to buy quieter, cleaner, battery-powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers. Now it is up to the Governor to sign the bill into law.

“Sometimes the Bible in the hand of one man is worse than a whisky bottle in the hand of (another)... There are just some kind of men who - who're so busy worrying about the next world they've never learned to live in this one, and you can look down the street and see the results.”

— Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

A NOTE OF THANKS

Kevin Smith, who has been recovering from knee replacement surgery in early March, has asked the *Humanist Monthly* to publicly acknowledge CDHS members for their phone calls, emails, cards, and texts.

Honorable mention, he noted, goes to:

- Sue Parry for a contribution of homemade soup and a shower seat
- Fred and Sherry Levine for a pre-made dinner
- Deb Segel for sandwiches and a loaf of artisan bread
- Mira Peck for an “ice machine” that relieved pain and discomfort
- Carol Quantock for homemade shepherd’s pie
- Other folks who have donated time, effort, food, etc. since the request was submitted.

Join the bunch for lunch! We’ll be dining again at the Café Madison, 578 Columbia Turnpike, East Greenbush, NY 12061 (<https://www.cafemadisonalbany.com/>) on May 21st at 12:00 Noon. In June, we’ll meet on Thursday the 18th. Please let Rosina Ansaldo know by Wednesday evening if you’ll be joining them.

NOTE: If you know of a great local eatery, please don’t be shy; recommend it! We’d like to give our local restaurants a chance by rotating them every few months and returning to the ones that get enthusiastic thumbs up. Please send ideas to Rosina Ansaldo. Thanks!

Undaunted in Virginia—No one calls Louise Lucas ‘weak’

(by Jennifer Rubin, *The Contrarian*, April 24, 2026)

On Tuesday, Virginia voters ignored Republicans' shameless disinformation campaign to pass a redistricting referendum creating four more Democratic-leaning congressional districts. As predicted, the race was close (3 points), but Democrats, independents, and disaffected Republicans made clear that they would not tolerate Donald Trump's re-redistricting gambit, which he began last summer in Texas. (On Wednesday, a right-wing judge enjoined implementation of the map. Virginia's attorney general immediately appealed. This judge had previously issued similar orders blocking redistricting; all were overturned.)

Democrats certainly have come a long way in the re-redistricting wars. Last August, when Texas Democratic state lawmakers returned home from their out-of-state venture to deny a quorum for the re-redistricting plan Trump had foisted on Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, Republicans seemed to have the upper hand in re-redistricting. With Trump driving the effort to rig the midterms, many political watchers expected Republicans to pick up batches of seats — not only in Texas, but in other red states.

Things did not turn out that way. And with the heavy shift in Hispanics' voting preferences, Republicans may well come up short in the re-redistricted seats in Texas. Democrats believe that incumbent Dems will manage to save at least 2 of the 5 seats that Republicans intended to snatch.

Moreover, with Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries raising tens of millions of dollars, rallying Democrats, and doing gobs of free media appearances, Democrats nationalized the fight. They struck back resoundingly with Prop. 50 in California, potentially adding another 5 seats to their tally. And with Virginians voting on Tuesday to redistrict their state, as many as four more districts may fall into Democrats' laps.

Previously, Republicans picked up one seat in Missouri (still subject to a referendum and legal challenge) and two in Ohio (although Democrats may well defend all their seats). Utah (+1D) and North Carolina (+1 R) cancelled each other out. Indiana rebuffed Trump's redistricting demand. Florida may try a belated re-redistricting. However, many Republicans are nervous that the scheme will backfire if Hispanics, as has been the case in primary voting, turn out heavily for Democrats, especially in the Miami area. In short, Republicans may well wind up losing ground (hence the recriminations).

In addition to Jeffries, credit in Virginia goes to firebrand Democratic state Sen. Louise Lucas, who pushed for a redo of the map that would aim for 4 more Democratic seats. NPR reported:

About redistricting, she wrote to Republican U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, "You all started it, and we f***ing finished it."

"Donald Trump knows he's going to lose the midterms. He knows it. That's why he started this mess in the first place," Lucas said in announcing the new map. "Today, we are leveling the playing field. These are not ordinary times, and Virginia will not sit on the sidelines while it happens."

After the win, she took a victory lap: "I watched what was happening in Texas — Republican legislators backed by Donald Trump and MAGA extremists — try to rig the system before voters ever had a chance to speak," said Lucas. "If they start this fight, Virginia is going to finish it ... and in a special election — one question, no candidate, millions of dollars spent trying to confuse voters, Virginians still showed up."

At a Wednesday press conference, Jeffries gleefully touted the multi-state strategy he spearheaded. "Donald Trump and Republicans launched this gerrymandering war," Jeffries told reporters. "And we've made clear as Democrats that we're going to finish it." He brandished a slogan lifted from a MAGA operative: "Maximum warfare. Everywhere. All the time." He may have finally shed his reputation for excessive caution.

The redistricting fight has accomplished more than simply adding seats to Democrats' column. At the start of the battle last summer, Trump's gambit woke up Democrats in Texas. After a dismal 2024 election, the redistricting fight energized local party officials and encouraged national Democrats to focus on and invest in the Lone Star State. Democrats found an opening to present themselves as the champions of Hispanic and Black voters who were losing voting power.

And perhaps most significantly, the Texas fight boosted the visibility of state senator James Talarico. He swiftly became a prominent figure in the Democratic resistance to Trump's 2026 midterm-rigging. "My Democratic colleagues and I just left the state of Texas to break quorum and stop Trump's redistricting power grab. Trump is trying to rig the midterm elections right before our eyes. But first he'll have to come through us," Talarico said at the time on Twitter. "It's time to fight back." It is questionable whether Talarico would have gone on to win the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate had it not been for his role in fighting the Republican re-redistricting scheme. Talarico has put a critical Senate seat in play for Democrats and become an exemplar of a new generation of young, adept progressives with broad appeal.

Beyond Texas, the fight over Trump's re-redistricting plot helped Democratic leaders address a key problem with their own voters, as well as independents: Voters think Democratic politicians are weak.

As pollster and analyst G. Elliott Morris has discussed, "Democrats' weakness problem stands out as a particularly strong signal of intra-party dissatisfaction. . . Just 53% of Democrats call their party tough, compared to 80% of Republicans." The same deficit has affected Democrats' appeal to independents. "What is a Democratic problem is that 45% of independents say Democrats are weak," Morris explained. That perception of weakness is a critical liability since "perceiving a party as strong is a stronger predictor of voting for that party than perceiving the other party as extreme."

Arguably, the re-redistricting fight has helped change the image of Democrats nationally from a party playing by Marquess de Queensbury rules against street thugs to a party that recognizes it must brawl in defense of democracy. It also seemed to supercharge Democrats to take other bold moves, including holding firm on ICE funding, virulently opposing Trump's war against Iran, demanding Cabinet members quit, pressing to release the Epstein-Trump pedophile files, and challenging Trump's mental competency.

In that regard, the re-redistricting fight may turn out to be a crucial inflection point for the party, for 2028 aspirants who helped champion the effort (e.g., Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, California Gov. Gavin Newsom), and for the man likely to be the next speaker, Hakeem Jeffries.

This week, credit goes to the voters of Virginia, and especially to Louise Lucas, who kept the momentum going throughout the re-redistricting fight. As Lucas put it in January, "I said in August of 2025 that the maps will be 10-1 and I'm sticking with that today." She certainly did. She pulled Virginia Democrats, not known for partisan skirmishing, into the fray and scored another win against MAGA Republicans. She was an undaunted, unwavering, and unapologetic advocate of blocking Republicans' power grab. Thanks to her and to Virginia voters, Democrats maintained their re-redistricting edge and, in the process, rediscovered their fighting spirit. We salute Lucas and her fellow Virginians for putting an exclamation point on a national fight to thwart Trump and his schemes.

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E-mail us at cdhs.albany@gmail.com

Visit us on the web at humanistsociety.net

The Capital District Humanist Society (CDHS) is an independent, non-profit (and non-prophet), non-partisan and strictly non-religious educational and social organization for those who share humanist values: commitment to education, rational and free inquiry, democracy, social concerns and fellowship. CDHS is affiliated with the four major humanist organizations - the American Humanist Association (AHA), the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) and the Humanists International (HI).

There are five types of CDHS member support: Individual, \$50/yr.; Family, \$80/yr.; Sustaining, \$100/yr.; Patron, \$150/yr.; and Lifetime Member, one contribution of \$1000 or more.

Members receive our publication, *The Humanist Monthly*, and vote each September on the make-up of the governing Executive Council. Members are eligible for election to the Executive Council and may also serve as appointed officials. Members are welcome to attend Executive Council meetings.

The IRS recognizes CDHS as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, all donations, both cash and materials with established "fair market value", qualify as charitable contributions for income tax purposes.

Donations are gratefully accepted to help speed our growth. CDHS is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization under the IRS Code. Financial disclosure information and our annual report are available upon request.

If you know of someone who may be interested in CDHS, please pass this newsletter along or give us the name; we will send a sample copy or two with no obligation.

We value your input. In the best humanist tradition, CDHS has no rigid picture of itself. We ask you to join us, not follow us. What activities and services would you like CDHS to provide its members? Send us your suggestions, questions, and comments.

INDIVISIBLE EVENT - TONIGHT!

Indivisibles, come learn about election protection in NYS with special guest facilitator Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause NY, a c(3) focused on protecting voting rights and democracy in the Empire State. This is a Zoom event. Please see below for details:

Date: April 28, 2026

Time: 7:00 PM Eastern

Registration: [https://indivisible.zoom.us/meeting/register/9N_2iIELSDqFOjS4A67GsQ?fbclid=IwY2xjawRdw9hleHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETFZWmpya2VEVkmXWmw5aTcyc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHuwOAJsMDEv55cLIs9TSd3nRa0bETA_laTUvkBMfL7xgEndd-2lSrrGsRoZD_aem_S6EYNIQoA1gUyMzwnJABjQ#/registration](https://indivisible.zoom.us/join/9N_2iIELSDqFOjS4A67GsQ?fbclid=IwY2xjawRdw9hleHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETFZWmpya2VEVkmXWmw5aTcyc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHuwOAJsMDEv55cLIs9TSd3nRa0bETA_laTUvkBMfL7xgEndd-2lSrrGsRoZD_aem_S6EYNIQoA1gUyMzwnJABjQ#/registration)

By providing your email address and registering for this event, you agree to receive email updates from Indivisible, including follow-up from this Zoom event. You can unsubscribe at any time by clicking on the Unsubscribe link at the bottom of an Indivisible email.

CDHS PHONE NUMBER TO CHANGE

Don Porterfield reports that he is seeking a new CDHS telephone number through Google due to the termination of our old phone number option.

The phone number has been removed from this newsletter until a replacement number is available. If you need to contact CDHS, please email us at cdhs.albany@gmail.com. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

PHOTOS FROM APRIL SOCIAL

Dee Fuller sent these candid photos from last Saturday's social at the Albany Institute of History and Art. There were 22 attendees and everyone enjoyed the docent-led exhibits as well as the ongoing exhibits.



CDHS •• PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209 ••

<https://www.humanistsociety.net>

Find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety>

MEMBER SUPPORT FORM

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City / State / ZIP Code _____

Email _____ Fax _____

How did you hear about the Humanist Society? _____

All this information will be included in our Directory, which is distributed to members only, unless you request otherwise by checking and signing here: I do not want to be listed in the CDHS Member Directory _____

Levels of Member Support	Annual Payment	Date ____/____/____
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership	\$ 50	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership	\$ 80	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member	\$100	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$150	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Life Member	one-time contribution of \$1000 or more	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional tax-deductible donation	\$ _____	_____

Please make checks payable to CDHS

Please send me additional information