

Pray for Change

By Reg P. Wydeven
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When I was in college, I loved my summer job as a janitor for the school district. It was a fun job to get the school I used to attend all cleaned for the next year's crop of students. I also learned invaluable skills to prepare me for home ownership, such as carpentry, masonry, electrical work, painting, and flooring. Plus, I can get gum out of anything.

The job wasn't all peachy, however. In addition to having to scrub toilets and garbage cans, I was occasionally exposed to a hostile work environment. Almost every day I felt harassed. After all these years, I can finally talk about it. See, one of my bosses was a die-hard Chicago Bears fan.

On most days, he would wear either a Bears t-shirt or hat or both. He would continuously tell me that the '85 Bears was the greatest team of all time. He even promised me a longer lunch break if I said that Jim McMahon was better than Brett Favre.

While I can joke about good-natured ribbing at my job, not everyone is so lucky.

Take the employees of Dynamic Medical Services, for instance. One of their job requirements was to spend at least half their work days in courses learning about Scientology. According to a complaint filed earlier this month by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Miami-based medical and chiropractic clinic allegedly forced its employees to practice Scientology.

Dr. Dennis Nobbe, the owner of Dynamic Medical, is accused by the EEOC of mandating that its employees participate in Scientology religious practices, such as "screaming at ashtrays or staring at someone for eight hours without moving."

In a statement released by the EEOC, the clinic even compelled one employee "to undergo an 'audit' by connecting herself to an 'E-Meter,' which Scientologists believe is a religious artifact, and required her to undergo 'purification' treatment at the Church of Scientology."

According to the suit, when the employees complained about having to attend the Scientology courses, they were informed that participation was a requirement of the job. Two employees were purportedly fired because they refused to take part in the practices "and/or did not conform to Scientology religious beliefs."

The EEOC's statement reads, "When an employer makes an employment decision based on employees' failure to adopt the employer's religious beliefs, it violates federal law. The EEOC will act vigorously to protect the rights of workers who are subjected to religious harassment and coercion in the workplace."

Dynamic Medical denies the allegations and claims it will defend its practices.

While Americans have the freedom to practice whatever religion they choose, we are also protected from having our employer's religion imposed upon us. The EEOC's statement goes on to say that, "Employees' freedom from religious coercion at the workplace must be protected."

While as a Packer fan I may not be protected by the EEOC, I did take comfort in the fact that lately, it's the hapless Bear fans that need protection.