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Louisiana received approximately \$2,745,625 in federal funds for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs in Fiscal Year 2006.¹

Louisiana Sexuality Education Law and Policy

Louisiana does not require schools to offer sexuality or sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV education, but schools are permitted to offer it after sixth grade. State law mandates that sexuality education cannot be offered in kindergarten through sixth grade, except in Orleans Parish, which may offer sexuality education in the third grade and above. Schools must provide this education “regardless of the student’s grade level” if the student is parenting or pregnant.

Louisiana law defines sexuality education as:

[T]he dissemination of factual biological or pathological information that is related to the human reproduction system (sic) and may include the study of sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy, childbirth, puberty, menstruation, and menopause, as well as the dissemination of factual information about parental responsibilities under the child support laws of the state.

The education must be integrated into “an existing course study such as biology, science, physical hygiene, or physical education.” It cannot include “religious beliefs, practices in human sexuality, nor the subjective moral and ethical judgments of the instructor or other persons. Students shall not be tested, quizzed, or surveyed about their personal or family beliefs or practices in sex, morality, or religion.”

Classes may not include “any sexually explicit materials depicting male or female homosexual activity.” They also may not in “any way counsel or advocate abortion.” In addition, this education must emphasize that:

- abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage as the expected standard for all school-age children;
- abstinence from sexual activity is a way to avoid unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and other associated health problems; and
- each student has the power to control personal behavior and to encourage students to base action on reasoning, self-esteem, and respect for others.

Louisiana also requires that all public high schools that offer home economics classes must also provide “parenthood education,” which must include the topics of family living and community relationships, the consequences of the lack of adequate prenatal care, home management, and the responsibilities of parenthood.

In addition, Louisiana now requires adoption awareness be included in any health education or appropriate class. This includes instruction on “the benefits of adoption for families wishing to add a child, for potential adoptees, and for persons who are pregnant or who have a child for whom they are unable to care.”

According to the *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators*, students must be taught “the principle modes by which communicable diseases, including, but not limited to, HIV infection, are spread and the best methods for the restriction and prevention of these diseases.”

Parents or guardians may remove their children from sexuality education and/or STD/HIV education classes. This is referred to as an “opt-out” policy.

See Louisiana Revised Statutes 17:263, 17:279, 17:281, and *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators-Bulletin 741*.

Recent Legislation

Bill Includes Adoption Awareness in Health Education

Senate Bill 111, introduced in March 2006, requires the inclusion of adoption awareness in any health education or appropriate class. This means that instruction on “the benefits of adoption for families wishing to add a child, for potential adoptees, and for persons who are pregnant or who have a child for whom they are unable to care.” The bill passed in June 2006 and is now law.

Events of Note

Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence (GPA) Continues to Promote Religion November 2004

In a November 17, 2004 letter to the Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence (GPA), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) identified numerous violations of a 2002 settlement regarding the program’s promotion of religion.² In 2002, the GPA received more than \$1.5 million from the federal government’s Title V account (the abstinence-only-until-marriage program authorized in conjunction with the Welfare Reform Act of 1996) and more than \$1 million in state funds.

In 2002, the ACLU filed suit against the GPA claiming that it violated the constitutional separation of church and state by using federal and state abstinence-only-until-marriage funds to convey religious messages and advance religion. Later that year, the two parties reached a settlement. As part of the settlement, the GPA must review lessons and curricula prior to their use and must post a statement on its website and all promotional materials that reads:

The GPA is a health and education program committed to promoting and publicizing the benefits of abstinence. Under limits imposed by the Constitution, the GPA’s funds may not be used for activities, events or materials that include religious messages or otherwise promote or advance religion.³

In its November 17 letter, the ACLU noted several examples of website content that violated this settlement. In one such example, which appeared in a section entitled “Ask the Experts,” a young woman asks how she should convince her friend to remain a virgin. The GPA’s “expert” responds, “Tell your friend that abstaining from sex until entering a loving marriage will give her the freedom to acheive (sic) true self-esteem—to be really, truly, ‘cool’ in God’s eyes as well as yours and mine.”⁴ Similarly, in answer to a question about virginity pledges, the expert writes, “God will help

you to explain what you mean....He will provide the words, if you let Him...please know that God is standing beside you the whole way. Have courage and answer the question as God wants you to.”⁵

According to the ACLU’s letter, the website also refers readers to scripture in linked articles and includes summaries of articles that advance religion. For example, an article by the American Life League is included in the website’s “Library.” The article states, “the condom’s biggest flaw is that those using it to prevent the conception of another human being are offending God.” It continues, “Furthermore, each and every act of marital intercourse must be both unitive (sic) and open to procreation. Any action, including condom use, which has as its purpose to render procreation impossible is intrinsically evil.”⁶

Joe Cook, executive director of ACLU of Louisiana, explained, “The GPA has not only failed to correct the error of its ways, but in the past two years it has gone out of its way to use taxpayer money to layer religious content on religious content. It is time for the GPA to be held accountable to the Constitution and to its own legal agreements. If it fails to do so, we’ll see them in court for round two.”⁷

The Governor’s deputy press secretary, Roderick Hawkins, responded to the letter saying that the Governor’s office was unaware of the site’s content or of the 2002 settlement until they received the ACLU’s letter. He said the office was looking into the matter and stated, “Our concern is that the site comply with the agreement and the settlement of 2002. That’s what we’re doing right now—making sure the site complies.”

According to the GPA’s former director, Dan Richey, the program has followed the settlement and contracts with the Louisiana Family Forum to develop and maintain the site.⁸ The Louisiana Family Forum, whose mission is to “persuasively present Biblical principles in the centers of influence,” has in turn handed the contract over to Nancy Victory, wife of conservative Louisiana Supreme Court Justice Jeffrey Victory. Ms. Victory stated that the site is “not involved with promoting religion.”⁹

In early December 2004, Governor Kathleen Blanco (D) rejected the ACLU’s claims and said that the program is in compliance with the federal settlement. In a written statement she said, “I hope that the ACLU would agree that among the many voices in this debate are those whose deep faith in God prompts them to discuss this issue from a Biblical perspective. This is a perspective that I and most Louisiana citizens strongly share.”¹⁰ The ACLU is considering further legal action.

*School Establishes New Club Policy As a Result of Debate over GSA
May 2004; Mandeville, LA*

As a result of a debate over the establishment of a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) at Fontainebleau High School in Mandeville, LA, all high school clubs in the district will now have to follow stringent requirements in order to remain school clubs. The Gay-Straight Alliance was formed in the spring of 2003. School officials allowed the club to meet in part out of fear of legal repercussions because of the Equal Access Act.

At a meeting of the St. Tammany Parish School Board, more than 30 parents voiced complaints against the club and cited a recent court case involving a Lubbock, TX school’s decision not to allow a GSA on campus. One parent said he worried that the goal was to advance a national homosexual agenda. “They accomplish this by gaining a foothold in our nation’s schools through the establishment of student-led clubs to propagandize legitimacy for the homosexual lifestyle,” stated the parent.¹¹

As a result of the complaints, the school board instructed the school to prepare a review of policies, laws, and court rulings regarding clubs at public schools and discuss the issue at a future meeting.

In March 2004, the Louisiana Chapter of the ACLU came out in full support of the GSA and said it was considering further action. The Executive Director of the Louisiana ACLU said, “Instead of wasting time investigating the potential for disbanding the GSA, the St. Tammany Parish School Board should

work to foster tolerance and make students who have traditionally been marginalized feel safe and valued. We will entertain complaints from students who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed because of their gender or sexual orientation.”¹²

In April 2004, parents collected 1,300 signatures demanding the school shut down the GSA. One parent who opposed the club said, “Let’s show the nation we’re not fearful of the ACLU but we are fearful of our Lord.”¹³

In May 2004, responding to all the criticism surrounding the GSA, the school board unanimously passed a new policy that mandates stringent requirements for all clubs in the district’s seven high schools. The new policy requires that every club will have to reapply to hold meetings and club sponsors will have to fill out extensive paperwork. In addition, students who want to join a club will have to get written permission from their parents. One school board member explained the reasoning behind the new policy by saying, “The GSA prompted our discussion of the policy. Legal research has been conducted, and I’m confident our legal counsel has looked closely at the issues. I’m confident the superintendent and her staff have put together a good policy and good regulations.”¹⁴ If it fulfills all of the new rules, the GSA will be allowed to meet.

Louisiana’s Youth: Statistical Information of Note

- In 2000, Louisiana’s abortion rate was 11 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen abortion rate of 24 per 1,000 nationwide.¹⁵
- In 2004, Louisiana’s birth rate was 56 per 1,000 women ages 15–19 compared to a teen birth rate of 41 per 1,000 nationwide.¹⁶

*New Orleans, Louisiana*¹⁷

- In 2005, 52% of female high school students and 74% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported ever having had sexual intercourse compared to 46% of female high school students and 48% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 5% of female high school students and 29% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having had sexual intercourse before age 13 compared to 4% of female high school students and 9% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 13% of female high school students and 47% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having had four or more lifetime sexual partners compared to 12% of female high school students and 17% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, 39% of female high school students and 53% of male high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported being currently sexually active (defined as having had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to the survey) compared to 35% of female high school students and 33% of male high school students nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 74% of females and 85% of males in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having used condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 56% of females and 70% of males nationwide.

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- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 8% of females and 7% of males in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having used birth control pills the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 21% of females and 15% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, among those high school students who reported being currently sexually active, 11% of females and 21% of males in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sexual intercourse compared to 19% of females and 28% of males nationwide.
- In 2005, 79% of high school students in New Orleans, Louisiana reported having been taught about AIDS/HIV in school compared to 88% of high school students nationwide.

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Funding

Louisiana was eligible for \$1,283,563 in federal Title V funds in Fiscal Year 2006. The Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage grant requires states to provide three state-raised dollars or the equivalent in services for every four federal dollars received. The state match can be provided in part or in full by local groups. SIECUS was unable to obtain the exact amount of federal or state funding or information on how the required match is made up in Louisiana.

The money is controlled through the Governor's Program on Abstinence (GPA). The program has several components including:

- abstinence-only curriculum for junior high, high school, and college age students
- GPA Clubs for high school students
- GPA Collegiate Clubs
- a clearinghouse center/website
- teacher certification
- community-based projects

The GPA has established 309 high school clubs in Louisiana with more than 5,000 members and is currently working to establish GPA Collegiate (GPAC) clubs on college campuses throughout the state. GPAC has members at Baton Rouge Community College, Grambling, Louisiana State University, Louisiana State University-Eunice, McNeese, and Xavier University. GPA clubs participate in quarterly events and projects.

GPA's website contains numerous messages of fear as well as biased and inaccurate information. For example, in the "FAQs" section of the GPA website (www.abstinededu.com), one question asks, "OK, but it's a long time until I get married. Wouldn't it be better to use a condom for now and be safe? Isn't a condom better than nothing?" The answer given discourages condom use, includes inaccurate STD statistics, and includes a biased approach to sexual activity:

Well thank goodness those aren't our only two choices: a condom or nothing. It's not like you'll die if you don't have sex for awhile. Besides you can catch every STD in the book while wearing a condom, and that doesn't xactly (sic) guarantee your peace of mind. Speaking of your mind—and your heart—there isn't a condom made that will protect those, not even a little bit. People are just too complicated to separate their bodies and their personalities. The physical and emotional keep getting all mixed up. Just ask somebody whose one-night stand never called back. Or, on the other hand, ask a couple who have saved their physical intimacy

for their honeymoon. It's the perfect expression of the love they already share and only the beginning of the bond they'll be building for the rest of their lives together.¹⁸

As a result of a lawsuit brought by the ACLU, the website is required to post the following religious disclaimer:

The GPA is a health and education program committed to promoting and publicizing the benefits of abstinence. Under the limits imposed by the Constitution, the GPA funds may not be used for activities, events or materials that include religious messages or otherwise promote or advance religion. The GPA does not discourage or encourage private religious exercise. If you have any spiritual or religious questions that arise in the context of events sponsored by the GPA, the GPA encourages you to consult with a spiritual advisor from your faith or system of belief.¹⁹

Despite this, religious messages still exist on the site. For example, the website includes a "Question and Answer" section in which visitors ask questions regarding sexual activity. The answers often encourage them to turn to churches for guidance and strength:

Question: "Freeing myself to reach for the best life has to offer, I promise to abstain from sexual involvement from this day until I enter a marriage relationship." That's fine, at least for those who desire and plan to get married at some point in their lives. What about people like me (now in my 40s), and there are many like me, who have no desire to get married (note—I regularly have monogamous relationships with women). Are we supposed to stay abstinent all of our lives?

Answer: Why would you want to have a series of monogamous relationships instead of marriage? God's plan is for us not to be alone, but to have one spouse for life. When you are 55 and have a heart attack or cancer of the colon, which of these many women will be there for you? No one. Your commitment is to self-indulgence, not to wholly loving a woman—and being loved—as God intended. You will end up a lonely old man unless you move from selfishness to selflessness. It is your decision, but you have made the wrong one for 20 years. At the time I was in my 40s, my sons were teenagers, and are now in their 30s, and are a blessing to my wife and me. Where is your investment in the next generation? However, there is still time to build a marriage that could give you joy for the next 30 or 40 years. It would be sad to choose bachelorhood, as I see it.²⁰

Michael J. McManus
Co-Founder & President
Marriage Savers

The program's website lists Pam Stenzel, a national abstinence-only-until-marriage speaker, as an available speaker. Ms. Stenzel speaks to thousands of youth "about the consequences—both physical and emotional—of sex outside of marriage."²¹ She also produces books, curricula, CDs, jewelry, and videos with the abstinence-only-until-marriage message. Ms. Stenzel relies on a message of fear and shame regarding sexuality instead of giving young people accurate information. For example, during her video "Sex-Ed—No Screwin' Around," Ms. Stenzel states, "If you have sex outside of one permanent monogamous—that means one partner who has only been with you—if you have sex outside of that context, then you will pay."²²

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The GPA also produces a curriculum that targets seventh-grade students in all 64 of Louisiana’s parishes. It uses shame and fear to encourage youth to remain abstinent. The program relies on volunteer teachers to “teach kids how to say ‘no’ to high-risk behaviors and to say ‘yes’ to a bright, healthy future full of hope.”²³ The program requires two evenings of training for individuals who wish to become volunteer teachers and does not require that they have any prior experience teaching or working with youth. The program contains activities that reinforce GPA’s abstinence-only-until-marriage message. In one activity, youth are asked to decide which statements are myths and which are facts. One of these statements, “everyone is having sex,” is introduced as a myth. The teacher then explains:

If this was true, everyone would be in trouble in one way or another. Everyone would be suffering from emotional conflicts with others, pregnancy, and diseases. (However, there are some teens that are sexually active and they will eventually have to suffer the consequences.)²⁴

Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) and Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA) Grantees

There are three CBAE grantees in Louisiana: The Church United for Community Development, Council for the Advancement of Social Services and Education, and Operation Turn Around. There are no AFLA grantees in Louisiana.

The Council for the Advancement of Social Services and Education works with young people ages 12–17 across the state of Louisiana through its “Friends 4 Teens Project” using the abstinence-based curriculum *Working With Youth For a Better Tomorrow*.²⁵

Operation Turn Around—formerly “Know Your Bible Ministries”—began as a Bible study and offers different programs to the people of Minden, LA. Operation Turn Around is in the process of developing a teen pregnancy program ministry.²⁶ Training on abstinence for students began in February 2006. During the training, the abstinence coordinator for a crisis pregnancy center in Shreveport, LA “used different types of candy to serve as examples of ‘life,’ and also shared personal stories relating to abstinence.”²⁷

Federal and State Funding for Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Programs in FY 2006

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence (GPA) www.abstinencedu.com	\$1,283,563* federal	Title V

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Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Grantee Length of Grant	Amount of Grant	Type of Grant (includes Title V, CBAE, AFLA, and other funds)
The Church United for Community Development 2003–2006	\$316,096	CBAE
Council for the Advancement of Social Services and Education 2003–2006 www.casseusa.com	\$798,122	CBAE
Operation Turn Around 2005–2008 www.operationturnaround.org	\$347,844	CBAE

** SIECUS was unable to obtain the exact amount of Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage funding Louisiana received in Fiscal Year 2006.*

Title V Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Coordinator

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Louisiana Organizations that Support Comprehensive Sexuality Education

ACLU of Louisiana
 P.O. Box 56157
 New Orleans, LA 70156
 Phone: (504) 522-0617
www.laclu.org

AIDS Law of Louisiana
 2601 Tulane Ave., 5th Floor
 New Orleans, LA 70119
 Phone: (504) 799-3852
www.aidslaw.org

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Louisiana NOW
P.O. Box 750356
New Orleans, LA 70175
Phone: (504) 364-4444
www.louisiananow.org

NO/AIDS Task Force
2601 Tulane Ave., Suite 500
New Orleans, LA 70119
Phone: (504) 821-2601
www.noaidstaskforce.org

Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and the
Mississippi Delta
8200 Hampton St., Suite 229
New Orleans, LA 70118
Phone: (504) 861-7550
www.plannedparenthoodlouisiana.org

Louisiana Organizations that Oppose Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Louisiana Family Forum
655 St. Ferdinand St.
Baton Rouge, LA 70802
Phone: (225) 344-8533
www.lafamilyforum.org

Louisiana Right to Life Federation
P.O. Box 8807
Metairie, LA 70011
Phone: (504) 834-5433
www.lartl.org

Newspapers in Louisiana

The Advocate
Chris Baughman
Metro Editor
PO Box 588
Baton Rouge, LA 70821
Phone: (225) 388-0282

Alexandria Daily Town Talk
Sarah Crooks
Health & Medicine Reporter
1201 3rd St.
Alexandria, LA 71301
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The Courier
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¹ This refers to the fiscal year for the federal government which begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. The fiscal year is designated by the calendar year in which it ends; for example, Fiscal Year 2006 begins on October 1, 2005 and ends on September 30, 2006.

² Louise Melling, "Letter Addressing Settlement Violations in ACLU of Louisiana v. Foster," 15 November 2004, accessed 29 November 2004, <<http://www.aclu.org/ReproductiveRights/ReproductiveRights.cfm?ID=17026&c=147>>.

³ "AbstinencEdu.com," Louisiana Governor's Program on Abstinence (GPA), (2004), accessed 29 November 2004, <<http://www.abstinenceedu.com>>.

⁴ "Ask the Experts," Louisiana Governor's Program on Abstinence (GPA), (2004), accessed 29 November 2004, <<http://www.abstinenceedu.com>>.

⁵ Melling.

⁶ "Library, Medical Info: Safe Sex," Louisiana Governor's Program on Abstinence (GPA), (2004), accessed 29 November 2004, <<http://www.abstinenceedu.com>>.

⁷ Louisiana ACLU, "ACLU Asks Louisiana to Remove Religious Content from Abstinence-Only Website, Citing Numerous Violations of 2002 Agreement," Press Release published 17 November 2004, accessed 22 November 2004, <<http://www.laclu.org/News/2004/Nov17GPA.htm>>.

⁸ Keith O'Brien, "ACLU Threatens to File Lawsuit over Abstinence Program: Despite Settlement Web site cites God," *Times-Picayune* (LA), 18 November 2004, A4.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Laura Maggi, "Blanco defends Abstinence Web Site," *Times-Picayune*, 10 December 2004, accessed on Lexis-Nexis, 8 January 2005.

¹¹ "Parents Seek to Shut Down Gay/Straight High School Alliance," *Associated Press*, 11 March 2004, accessed on Lexis-Nexis, 8 January 2005.

¹² B. Martel, "ACLU to School Board: Don't Shut Down Gay Students' Group," *Associated Press*, 12 March 2004, accessed on Lexis-Nexis, 8 January 2005.

¹³ "Lawyer: Courts Would Oppose Ban on St. Tammany Parish Gay Group," *Associated Press*, 13 March 2004, accessed on Lexis-Nexis, 8 January 2005.

¹⁴ Trey Iles, "School Board Establishes New Policy on Clubs," *Times-Picayune* (LA), 14 May 2004.

¹⁵ U.S. *Teenage Pregnancy Statistics: Overall Trends, Trends by Race and Ethnicity and State-by-State Information* (New York: The Guttmacher Institute, February 2004), accessed 26 January 2007, <<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/2006/09/12/USTPstats.pdf>>.

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- ¹⁷ Danice K. Eaton, et al., “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2005,” *Surveillance Summaries, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 55, no. SS-5 (9 June 2006): 1-108, accessed 26 January 2007, <<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>>.
- ¹⁸ “FAQS,” Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence, (2007), accessed 27 March 2007, <<http://www.abstinencedu.com/explore.cfm/louisianagpa/faqs>>.
- ¹⁹ “Religion Disclaimer,” Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence, (2007), accessed 27 March 2007, <<http://www.abstinencedu.com/site100-01/1001731/docs/disclaimer.doc>>.
- ²⁰ “Ask the Experts,” Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence, (2007), accessed 27 March 2007, <<http://www.abstinencedu.com/explore.cfm/viewqanda?s=1001731>>.
- ²¹ “About Pam,” Pam Stenzel, (2007), accessed 30 January 2007, <<http://www.pamstenzel.com/aboutpam.asp>>.
- ²² “Sex-Ed—No Screwin’ Around: Video Clip 1,” Pam Stenzel, (2007), accessed 30 January 2007, <<http://www.pamstenzel.com/clip1.html>>.
- ²³ “Teacher Training,” Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence, (2007), accessed 27 March 2007, <<http://www.abstinencedu.com/explore.cfm/curriculum/teachertraining>>.
- ²⁴ *Governor’s Programs on Abstinence Teacher Guide* (Louisiana Governor’s Program on Abstinence, June 2002), 21.
- ²⁵ “Programs,” Council for the Advancement of Social Services and Education (CASSE), accessed 31 January 2007 <<http://www.casseusa.com/programs.html#abstinence>>.
- ²⁶ “History,” Operation Turn Around, accessed 12 January 2007, <<http://www.operationturnaround.org/history.htm>>.
- ²⁷ Ibid.