

THE DAILY CALLER

Gay Student Activists Demand Cell Phone Records Of Law-And-Religion Professor

By [Eric Owens](#)

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Fringe-left student activists at the University of Virginia are seeking to use the power of the state to acquire private communication between a highly respected law-and-religion professor and organizations that either oppose gay marriage or support Religious Freedom Restoration Acts, which are laws on the books in 19 states.

The professor is Douglas Laycock of the University of Virginia.

The student activists are Gregory Lewis, who leads a group of campus activists called Queer and Allied Activism, and Stephanie Montenegro.

The pair are harassing Laycock because he has endorsed state laws that would accommodate religious groups that do not support, for example, gay marriage. The gay rights activists are also angry with the legal scholar because he has argued on behalf of Hobby Lobby in a Supreme Court case over whether private companies can cite religious reasons for refusing birth control in healthcare offerings.

Because they think Laycock is interfering with political causes they hold dear, Lewis and Montenegro have filed an extensive freedom of information request seeking a record of all of Laycock's cellphone records and all of his school-funded travel expenses, among much other information.

In the request, which [The Daily Progress of Charlottesville obtained](#), the student activists said they sought "a full, transparent accounting of the resources used by Professor Laycock which may be going towards halting the progress of the LGBT community and to erode the reproductive rights of women across the country."

Lewis and Montenegro indicated that they filed the freedom-of-information request to start a "public dialogue."

The students also suggested that they hope to pry deeply into Laycock's personal life because maybe he doesn't know how his own scholarly work is being used by religious people.

"As leaders on the UVA campus, we strongly believe in engaging in dialogue, and, equally as important, for professors to truly understand the implications of their work," the gay rights advocates said in a letter, also obtained by The Daily Progress.

"Most recently, your legal work on the topic of 'religious liberty' has been used as a basis of discrimination bills like the one that went into effect in Mississippi and nearly in Arizona," the letter scolded. "Your work has also been used in efforts to resist the requirement in the Affordable Care Act that employers cover the cost of contraception."

Lewis and Montenegro noted that they totally wouldn't want to hinder Laycock's right to academic freedom or intimidate him in any way.

"We don't think he's doing anything wrong," Lewis assured the Charlottesville paper. "It's just looking at whether he knows how it's being used."

Gay-rights militants at a national level are frustrated with Laycock because he has offered arguments in favor of religious freedom.

"There are already protections under freedom of religion," griped Heather Cronk, co-director of Berkeley, GetEQUAL, a gay rights advocacy group headquartered in Berkeley, Calif.

"There are no protections for LGBT people in place," Cronk told the Progress.

Laycock disagreed.

"My position is civil liberties applies to both sides," he countered. "It applies to all Americans."

Many civil libertarians have called the broad freedom of information request a crass form of bullying.

"You don't start a dialogue with FOIA requests," [wrote Stephen Bainbridge](#), a professor at the UCLA School of Law. "This is a blatant effort at deterring public participation by anyone who does not hew 100% to the most radical version of the gay rights movement."

Laycock's views are largely liberal, but certainly not in the modern, provincial sense. He is a gay-marriage advocate who believes religious adherents who run small businesses shouldn't have to participate in gay weddings if they'd rather not. He also supports complete church-and-state separation.

In a recently decided Supreme Court case, *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, the professor argued on the (losing) side challenging "explicitly Christian" prayer at the beginning of government meetings, [notes Overlawyered](#). He is also representing a Muslim prisoner who is challenging a prison rule against the half-inch-thick beard the prisoner wants to grow.

Laycock is married to Teresa A. Sullivan, the president of the University of Virginia.

The University of Virginia was established in 1819 by Thomas Jefferson, the primary drafter of the Declaration of Independence.