

# Is This Mockery Taking Religious Freedom Too Far?

If a church's purpose is blatantly satirical, as admittedly is the case with the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, is it entitled to the same First Amendment protections as "real churches"?

These are among the questions raised as a small group of people who whimsically call themselves Pastafarians—a silly play on the name of Jamaican Rastafarians—try to gain some measure of public respect. The movement, such as it is, was born in 2005 as a protest against teaching intelligent design as an alternative to evolution in Kansas schools.

Now a Utah woman has succeeded in getting her driver's license photo taken while wearing a colander or pasta strainer on her head as a religious statement, according to a report by The Associated Press.

Asia Lemmon, whose legal name appears on her driver's license as Jessica Steinhauser, said she encountered only brief resistance at the driver's license office when she showed up for her photo with a pasta strainer on her head.

Lemmon is a former porn star who performed under the name Asia Carrera, *The Spectrum of St. George* reported Monday. She also is an atheist. She said she wanted to make a statement with the photo.

Nannette Rolfe, the director of Utah's Driver License Division, said about a dozen Pastafarians have had their state driver's license photos taken with a similar colander or pasta strainer on their heads in recent years.

"As long as we can get a visual of the face, we're fine if they choose to wear the headgear," she told the AP for a story

that was widely circulated in the West.

Hats and headgear are not allowed for driver's license photos unless they're religious garments, Rolfe said. After the first few Pastafarians came in about two years ago, state officials determined the church is a recognized religion and its members don't require any special paperwork, she said.

The colander, official headgear for the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, is used to represent the person's belief in the church—a satirical movement promoting a lighthearted view of religion.

About two-thirds of the state's residents are Mormons, and Utah is home to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.