

Taxpayer-Funded Exorcisms? Senate Erupts Over California Healthcare Program

Sen. John Kennedy sparked controversy during a Senate hearing after sharply questioning why taxpayer dollars in California are being used to fund Native American spiritual healing practices that critics have labeled “exorcisms.”

During testimony before lawmakers, Kennedy pressed Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche over California’s Medi-Cal program, which expanded coverage in 2024 for certain tribal traditional healing services.

The exchange quickly gained national attention as debate intensified over whether taxpayer funds should support spiritual ceremonies and nontraditional healing practices.

According to Fox News, California’s expanded Medi-Cal coverage allows federally recognized tribal healers and “natural helpers” to provide certain culturally based services through Indian Health Care Providers. The services reportedly can include spiritual counseling, ceremonies, herbal remedies and other traditional healing methods.

Fox News cited earlier reporting from The Wall Street Journal that described some of the practices as including “exorcisms,” though California’s official policy language broadly references tribal spiritual and cultural healing.



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The debate comes amid larger scrutiny over California’s Medicaid spending.

Fox News reported that Medi-Cal spending has increased dramatically in recent years, rising from approximately \$100.7 billion in 2019 to a projected \$222 billion by 2026. The report also noted that the Trump administration recently suspended roughly \$1.4 billion in federal funding tied to California home healthcare and hospice programs amid investigations into alleged fraud.

For Christians, however, the controversy raises a deeper spiritual concern.

Spiritual practices disconnected from Jesus Christ open the door to dangerous deception. Scripture warns believers to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1) and cautions against practices connected to sorcery, divination and spiritual mediums in Deuteronomy 18:10-12, all of which are core principles in these Native American rituals.

Ephesians 6:12 says believers wrestle “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age.” Jesus Himself cast out demons throughout His earthly ministry, demonstrating His authority over darkness and evil spirits (Luke 4:41).

That distinction is important for many Christians following this story. Biblical deliverance ministry centers on the authority of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit—not rituals, ceremonies or spiritual traditions apart from God.

What erupted in a Senate hearing this week may ultimately point to a much larger conversation happening across the nation: what spiritual influences are currently shaping our nation, and what are we going to do about it?

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