



GOVERNMENT
ACCOUNTABILITY
PROJECT

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By Email

Michael Pack
Chief Executive Officer
U.S. Agency for Global Media
330 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20237

December 14, 2020

Re: Robert R. Reilly

Dear Mr. Pack:

On behalf of multiple Voice of America (VOA) staff who are whistleblowers and who wish to remain anonymous, we are writing to protest your recent announced appointment of Robert R. Reilly to serve as VOA Director. Mr. Reilly has a troubling history of mismanagement at VOA and he is openly hostile to Muslims and Gays. His controversial personal beliefs, which have been widely published, jeopardize the credibility and reputation of VOA, its journalists, editors and producers. For these reasons, as detailed further below, this appointment should be immediately rescinded.

Mr. Reilly's Management Failures at VOA in 2002 Caused His Forced Resignation

Mr. Reilly's public record documenting his past performance at VOA is disturbing. Eighteen years ago, he spent less than a year as the VOA Director – until his term “abruptly” ended on August 29, 2002,¹ when he was pressured to resign by VOA's then-oversight body, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).² The resignation was unplanned: “He was called out of a staff gathering to honor a retiring VOA veteran to meet with [BBG] members Thursday and

¹ New York Times, Voice of America Director Resigns (Aug. 30, 2002), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/30/world/world-briefing-the-world-voice-of-america-director-resigns.html>.

² UPI, VOA Chief Resigns under Pressure (Aug. 29, 2002), available at <https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2002/08/29/VOA-chief-resigns-under-pressure/24521030659707>.



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emerged later that day to inform division directors at a previously scheduled staff meeting that he was leaving.”³

Mr. Reilly’s exit followed “months of controversy, particularly over the announcement that he would close five overseas news bureaus.”⁴ As elaborated by UPI:

[I]n July [2002] the Broadcasting Board of Governors ordered Reilly to find money for a new 24-hour Farsi service to be broadcast into Iran. To meet the budget needs, Reilly opted to close VOA news offices in Brussels, Geneva, Hong Kong, Mexico City and Tokyo. His announcement to the news staff earlier this month was met largely with contempt, according to one VOA reporter who asked not to be identified.⁵

According to Kenneth Tomlinson, then-head of the BBG and a former VOA Director under President Ronald Reagan, “It’s unthinkable that the Hong Kong office would close. ... Bob is a great guy who will be better off doing creative work.”⁶ UPI echoed these sentiments, quoting a source “familiar with the dynamics between Reilly” and the BBG:

"Basically, this guy had zero credibility (with the board). ... He wanted to be all things to all people," said the source, "he wanted to be loved by the staff, loved by the board and loved by the unions. He wound up being loved by none of them."

³ Washington Times, *VOA Director was Undermined by Doubts* (Sept. 5, 2002), available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/sep/5/20020905-084734-7258r/>.

⁴ New York Times, *Voice of America Director Resigns* (Aug. 30, 2002), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/30/world/world-briefing-the-world-voice-of-america-director-resigns.html>.

⁵ UPI, *VOA Chief Resigns under Pressure* (Aug. 29, 2002), available at <https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2002/08/29/VOA-chief-resigns-under-pressure/24521030659707>.

⁶ Washington Times, *VOA Director was Undermined by Doubts* (Sept. 5, 2002), available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/sep/5/20020905-084734-7258r/>.



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Based on this record, it is inconceivable that Mr. Reilly could pass through any kind of screening for basic management competencies for any organization, let alone a return to VOA. It should be disqualifying.

Mr. Reilly's Open Contempt for Gays and Muslims

Mr. Reilly makes no secret about his views on members of LGBTQ and Muslim communities. He has published two books on the topics: *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Is Changing Everything* (2015), and *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis* (2015).⁷

In *Making Gay Okay*, he writes: “[T]he logic behind this process of legitimization of homosexual behavior undercuts any objective standards by which we could judge the moral legitimacy of anything. This is the ultimate danger it poses—including to America’s political foundations.”

The book has received significant praise from like-minded reviewers. One, in the *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, praised the work as “as the most persuasive natural law argument against homosexuality I’ve ever read.”⁸ Another, published by the Denver Seminary, closes with:

I cannot recommend Reilly’s book enough. It exposes not only the misleading and shallow clichés used repeatedly by those attempting to justify homosexual behavior, but

⁷ *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Is Changing Everything* (2015), available at <https://www.ignatius.com/Making-Gay-Okay-P895.aspx>; *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis* (2010), available at <https://isi.org/books/the-closing-of-the-muslim-mind/>.

⁸ *Journal of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, *Book Review / Making Gay Okay*, by Robert Reilly (May 19, 2015), available at http://cbmw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/6.5_Making-Gay-OK_Andrew-Walker.pdf.



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it gets to the heart of the matter through a piercing examination of Aristotle and Rousseau's anthropology and metaphysic.⁹

Still another from the official journal of the Catholic Medical Association:

While Reilly presents an excellent review of the real dangers of the LGBT agenda, one has to question whether his solution—namely focusing the sinfulness and unnaturalness of sodomy (anal inter-course)—is the answer. He touches on what may be a better strategy, stressing that the LGBT are not born that way and change is possible.¹⁰

Mr. Reilly's views on Muslims strike similarly obnoxious chords. In *the Closing of the Muslim Mind*, he writes "[t]he problem today is that the side of reason in Islam lost, and therefore its natural antibodies to this totalitarian infection are weak." One reviewer observes that "Reilly implies that Muslims would improve their culture if they were to convert to Catholic Christianity."¹¹

These attitudes are wholly inconsistent with the fundamental principle of equal justice under law.

We do not question Mr. Reilly's right as a private citizen to express personal opinions, even the ones discussed above demonstrating forms of intellectual racism and bigotry. And it goes without saying that Mr. Reilly would break the law should he attempt to act these on ideas. But Mr. Reilly's appointment to run VOA—whose mission is to model and explain American values such as democracy, freedom and diversity—sends a terribly awful signal to the rest of the

⁹ Denver Journal, *Review Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior is Changing Everything* (April 16, 2015), available at <https://denverseminary.edu/article/making-gay-okay-how-rationalizing-homosexual-behavior-is-changing-everything/>.

¹⁰ Liancre Quarterly, *Book Review: Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Changes Everything* (Mar. 28, 2018), available at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6027104/pdf/10.1177_0024363918761704.pdf.

¹¹ The Objective Standard, *Review: The Closing of the Muslim Mind, by Robert R. Reilly* (Feb. 20, 2012), available at <https://theobjectivestandard.com/2012/02/review-robert-r-reilly/>.



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world. It further stains the Agency's reputation for balance and objectivity, which are embodied in the Firewall, intended by law to protect editorial content from outside interference.

To elaborate further, the questions growing out of Mr. Reilly's appointment are obvious.

- How could VOA audiences and staff expect objectivity from a Director who has such divisive opinions and has propagated them widely? If Mr. Reilly's ideas were on a Twitter feed or Facebook page, they would likely violate Agency policies found in the Best Practices Guide.¹²
- How could VOA fairly represent America's ideals when the Director openly argues against the rights of Gays and Muslims to exist or believe?
- How could VOA present the kind of "responsible discussions" required under its Charter when its Director has firmly taken sides on fundamental human rights issues affecting Gays and Muslims?

The answers are equally obvious: It can't. Mr. Reilly's problems cannot be solved.

For these reasons, we request the immediate rescission of the Reilly appointment.

Very truly yours,

/s/

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¹² *VOA Best Practices Guide* (June 2020), available at <https://docs.voanews.eu/en-US-INSIDE/2018/07/30/2a8278e7-69ea-43bf-955d-e7bd81d5d9a5.pdf>.