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### August 19, 2008: Rick Warren and Religious Tests

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Title: Rick Warren and Religious Tests

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8/19/2008--Ruth Ann Dailey, a columnist for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, wrote an opinion piece in the Monday paper concerning Rick Warren's presidential forum on faith Saturday night. Dailey wrote this in part to respond to a C-Span caller who had objected to the whole interview with Senators Obama and McCain on the ground that the United States Constitution forbids any "religious Test" for public office in Article VI. Dailey correctly pointed out that Warren is not the government and so, technically speaking, Warren is not bound by the Constitution. [This is called the State Action doctrine and it is why, for example, a corporation can fire an employee for speaking out on company policy when the government might not be able fire an employee in a similar circumstance.] Dailey quoted Warren's broader response to this question. While Warren said he believes in the separation of church and state, he does not believe in the separation of faith and politics, "because faith is simply a worldview, and everybody's got a worldview." [I get Warren's idea, but it is still pretty horrifying to hear the Gospel reduced to a worldview.] The essentially religious nature of politics was the subject of my book, *American Religious Democracy: Coming to Terms with the End of Secular Politics* (Praeger 2007) so I will not comment further on that underlying point. I am tired, however, of hearing non-believers complain about religious political campaigning and invoking the Constitution. Chris Matthews did this on *Hardball* last December, attacking Mike Huckabee on this faux constitutional ground. So I thought I would reduce this issue to a syllogism. The Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment means that government cannot ban a socialist from running for President. But no one would object to a presidential forum discussing economic policy, nor to voters casting votes against the socialist candidate on that basis.