

An Egregious NYCPB Item

Written by James Randi

Thursday, 06 November 2008 00:00

Note: There is an error in this article. Please read the note at the bottom.

Reader Greg Rochon took justifiable exception to an item he came upon, one that reminded me of a similar "job opportunity" entry we commented on back in 2000 – see www.randi.org/jr/04-04-2000.html

Category #2. Greg is annoyed at the naivety exhibited by the New York State Consumer Protection Board, who declare their goal thus:

The Consumer Protection Board, established in 1970 by the New York State Legislature, is the State's top consumer watchdog and "think tank." The CPB's core mission is to protect New Yorkers by publicizing unscrupulous and questionable business practices and product recalls; conducting investigations and hearings; enforcing the "Do Not Call Law"; researching issues; developing legislation; creating consumer education programs and materials; responding to individual marketplace complaints by securing voluntary agreements; and, representing the interests of consumers before the Public Service Commission (PSC) and other State and federal agencies.

As you'll see, the specific phrase shown in red, above, is directly violated by what Greg has tried to bring to their attention. They are suggesting the use of those very "unscrupulous and questionable business practices" by advising applicants to use them to assess their own abilities! Of course, it only requires one sufficiently highly placed woo-woo in such an organization to endorse and/or encourage such practices. What we should do now is find out who that person may be...

Here's Greg Rochon's letter to the NYCPB:

To whom it may concern,

I was doing some research for an education project and came across your site (studentcounselor.com/Index.cfm). I found it to be quite practical until I noticed a link to career.astrology.com under the Self-Assessments section. This raised concerns, and after investigating the link I now have serious reservations about the quality of your service and the professionalism of your

An Egregious NYCPB Item

Written by James Randi

Thursday, 06 November 2008 00:00

organization.

I fail to understand how you can – in good conscience – provide a link to an astrology website and offer it as a viable avenue for students to assess their skills and potential career choices. Do you seriously believe that a student should base his or her future career decisions on their astrological sign? I find this highly irresponsible, unprofessional and anathema to what most would expect from a site called “ studentcounsellor.com ” – that is, good student counseling or advice.

Astrology is nonsense, pure and simple. Any cursory research will provide ample evidence to support this claim (I suggest skepdic.com/astrology.html as a good place to start). By providing a link to career.astrology.com you are promoting and perpetuating this nonsense.

If your defense is that you provide this link with a “wink and a nod” and with the understanding that people will know it is 'not serious', you are sadly mistaken. Too many people believe in this nonsense, and providing it as a service on your site is irresponsible.

I have taken the liberty of copying this email to James Randi of the James Randi Educational Foundation (see <http://www.randi.org/joom/>). Mr. Randi is someone who has spent the better part of his life fighting against superstition in the world and tirelessly promotes critical thinking about the supernatural and paranormal. I would highly recommend visiting the very popular JREF site and do some reading on the negative impact that the belief in astrology can have on a person's life.

We'll ask that Greg report to us if any response is offered by the NYCPB...

NOTE:

The mention of the NYCPB in this article is erroneous. Apparently, Randi received two very similar reports, and they got merged into one. He did not discover this error until after he had returned from his travels, and his original notes were gone. The JREF would like to be very clear that the NYCPB is not responsible for overseeing studentcounsellor.com, a Canadian website, in any way and we apologize for the error and the length of time it took to correct it. The original text is left in place so that the whole story can be known. Thank you to our readers for noticing this error and bringing it to our attention. - Jeff Wagg