

**EDITORIAL: Woogy-Boogy [Richmond Times-Dispatch, Va.]**

Jan. 25--In addition to all the other rules they must obey, should investment brokers in Chesterfield have to get character references and a police permit to open up shop? The question occurs because of a lawsuit brought against the county by Sophie King, a spiritual adviser who objects to being classified as a fortune teller. That classification obliges her to jump through a lot of hoops to be allowed to operate her business.

The distinction between spiritual adviser and fortune teller is too fine for us to draw (and probably for the county, too). But we do marvel at Chesterfield's strict rules for fortune tellers, and wonder why they're so strict. A background check? Police permission? Why on Earth? None of the surrounding localities has policies anywhere near so onerous, and they do not seem to be suffering from a fortune-telling crime wave.

Fortune tellers predict the future -- not always well -- through obscure means that their clients do not understand. The same might be said of many investment advisers. As the near-collapse of the financial sector in 2008 shows, sometimes even masters of the universe in glass corner offices get things woefully wrong. All things considered, fortune tellers may do less harm.

Of course, some in Chesterfield might view fortune-telling and whatnot as a form of the occult, therefore un-Christian and perhaps even a tool of the devil. But since belief in the devil is hardly based on rational criteria itself, it seems a poor reason on which to rest an apparently discriminatory public policy.

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