

## THE THING IS

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Emmy-nominated writer [JASON ODELL WILLIAMS](#) discusses Skylight Theatre Company's National New Play Network rolling premiere of *Church & State*, directed by Elina de Santos. Previews begin June 24. Opens July 2.

“The idea for the play started a long time ago, at the time of the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007. I went to the University of Virginia, which is in Charlottesville. We were rival schools. There were candlelight vigils at my school in sympathy to what happened at Virginia Tech and I found myself really thinking about this issue. Then after Tucson, when Gabby Giffords was shot [2011], it really shook me up. I started contemplating, I wonder what would have happened if that had been a Republican and not a Democrat. That was the germ of the idea. Then after Sandy Hook happened in 2012, I thought, enough is enough, I have to actually write something. I wrote a really fast, angry draft. It was very one-sided. Ideas don't ever come to me in an instant. It is a combination of several things. One idea adds to another, adds to another, and so on. Over the course of a couple of years, beginning in 2013, I started crafting it into the play that will be premiering at the Skylight. I did have a couple of readings in New York and New Jersey. I am really delighted that National New Play Network is sponsoring this as a rolling world premiere. It starts with the Skylight. It will be followed by productions at JCC Centerstage in Rochester, New York [Oct/Nov] and then at New Jersey Repertory Company [Spring, 2017].”