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## Supreme Court reaffirms Roe, approves abortion restraints

By Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- In a mixed decision that drew disapproval from both sides of the abortion debate, the U.S. Supreme Court narrowly reaffirmed the "essential holding" of Roe vs. Wade while also approving most provisions of Pennsylvania's restrictive abortion statute.

The June 29 action left analysts debating the extent to which abortion rights were set back or substantially upheld by the high court.

Spokespersons for both sides said they lost ground in the decision, since the court neither struck down a woman's fundamental right to obtain an abortion -- which was the objective of anti-abortionists -- nor prevented states from placing restrictions on abortions -- the pro-choice goal.

Four of the court's most conservative members said they would have reversed the landmark 1973 Roe decision that recognized abortion as a fundamental constitutional right. But three Reagan-Bush appointees -- Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy and David Souter -- joined Justices Harry Blackmun and John Paul Stevens in forming a 5-4 majority to reaffirm a woman's right to choose an abortion in the early stages of pregnancy, the "essential holding" in Roe vs. Wade.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, joined by Justices Byron White, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, said "Roe was wrongly decided" and "it can be and should be overruled."

In ruling on Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey, the nine justices directed an unusual amount of criticism at their colleagues in five opinions that covered 168 pages. In the end, they disagreed about how much of Roe was left standing.

The only part of the Pennsylvania law to be struck down was its provision requiring a married women to notify her spouse before obtaining an abortion. The same provision was ruled invalid by the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In votes ranging from 7-2 to 9-0, the high court upheld the following provisions:

-- An informed-consent requirement that requires a physician to

provide, among other things, information about the abortion procedure, the health risks of abortion and childbirth, and the "probable gestational age of the unborn child" at least 24 hours before an abortion is performed.

-- A parental-consent provision that requires the informed consent of a parent or guardian for an abortion performed on a woman under 18, unless a judge elects to bypass this requirement.

-- A reporting provision that requires abortion providers to report the facility's name and address, the identification of physicians performing abortion and other specific information about each abortion performed. It also requires quarterly reports showing the number of abortions performed according to trimester.

-- A provision that overrides other parts of the law to permit an immediate abortion in medical emergencies. Opponents argued that the Pennsylvania law's definition of "medical emergency" was too narrow to apply to some situations that involve significant health risks. The high court held that the appeals court's interpretation of the definition was broad enough to cover those situations.

The coalition of O'Connor, Kennedy and Souter in support of Roe vs. Wade disappointed many anti-abortionists, particularly since any one of the three Reagan-Bush appointees could have provided the court the fifth vote necessary to overturn Roe.

The joint O'Connor-Kennedy-Souter opinion said that "the essential holding of Roe vs. Wade should be retained and reaffirmed." But it also rejected Roe's trimester analysis that barred regulation of abortion during the first trimester and permitted only regulations designed to protect the woman's health during the second trimester.

The trio's opinion also announced a new standard for judging abortion-rights cases. The opinion abandoned the traditional test that requires the state to show a compelling reason to restrict a fundamental constitutional right like abortion. In its place, the trio said, states should use the "undue burden" test.

By that standard, disputes between the state's right to protect potential life and the woman's constitutional right to obtain an abortion must be reconciled in a way that does not place an undue burden on the woman.

An undue burden exists, the joint opinion states, "if its purpose or effect is to place a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability," that is, the point at which the fetus could survive outside the womb.

Recognizing a woman's right to choose abortion before viability does not prevent the state "from taking steps to ensure that this choice is thoughtful and informed," the joint opinion said.

Laws designed to further a state's interest in potential life "must be calculated to inform the woman's free choice, not hinder it," the joint opinion said.

Rehnquist's opinion challenged the notion that the court was reaffirming the central holding of Roe. The O'Connor-Kennedy-Souter opinion "retains the outer shell of Roe vs. Wade... but beats a wholesale retreat from the substance of that case," Rehnquist wrote.

Rather than applying a compelling-interest or undue-burden standard, Rehnquist said he would approve the Pennsylvania restrictions because they are "rationally related" to the state's interest.

In a separate concurring opinion joined by Rehnquist, White and Thomas, Scalia said abortion is not a liberty protected by the Constitution. That opinion indicates the drive to overturn Roe vs. Wade has four votes on the high court, just one short of the necessary majority.

The fact that four justices announced their clear desire to reverse Roe was not lost on Blackmun, author of the 1973 decision. After harshly

criticizing the views of Rehnquist and Scalia, Blackmun said that in one sense, the June 29 ruling "is worlds apart from that of the Chief Justice and Justice Scalia. And yet, in another sense, the distance between the two approaches is short -- the distance is but a single vote.

"I am 83 years old. I cannot remain on this court forever and when I do step down, the confirmation process for my successor well may focus on the issue before us today. That, I regret, may be exactly where the choice between the two worlds will be made."

With the next Supreme Court appointee apparently holding the key to the future of Roe vs. Wade, the abortion debate is expected to heat up the current campaign to elect a president, since the winner likely will nominate the next justice to the court.

In the meantime, however, the focus of the abortion debate is expected to shift to Congress, which is considering legislation to write Roe's protections into federal law, and to state legislatures, where the June 29 court decision will be used to evaluate the constitutionality of laws restricting abortion.

Strict abortion laws have been passed in Louisiana, Utah and the American territory of Guam, each of which bans abortions except under severely limited circumstances. It is unlikely that any of them will stand up to the Supreme Court's new standard of judgment in abortion cases.

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CLC blasts abortion decision;
others say debate will heat up

By Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The Supreme Court made a mistake by not using a Pennsylvania abortion case to reverse Roe vs. Wade, the court's landmark decision that gave women the right to abortions, according to officials of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The court "stumbled backward" by reaffirming Roe vs. Wade and not at least weakening that ruling's protections for abortion, said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Nashville-based CLC. Whitehead said it is "extremely disappointing" that the June 29 decision "vigorously defends Roe's philosophy of convenience abortion."

The Supreme Court, ruling on Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania vs. Casey, reaffirmed the core of its 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision while upholding most provisions of the Pennsylvania Abortion Control Act of 1982, which restricted abortions in the state.

The court's majority opinion ruled that states cannot place an "undue burden" on women seeking abortions before the fetus could survive outside the womb.

Noting the nine-member court fell one vote short of reversing Roe, Whitehead said abortion foes now will have to wait for "another real pro-life justice" to be appointed before the court can put a stop to "the convenience killing of pre-born babies."

Whitehead and CLC Executive Director Richard Land were unavailable to discuss the court's decision, but they released a statement that offered both praise and criticism of the decision.

Land lamented the fact the court couldn't "summon the nerve" to strike down Roe. Comparing the court's handling of the Pennsylvania case to a child's first approach to a high-diving board, Land blasted the justices for "crawling back down the ladder" instead of dumping Roe. "It's well past time to take the plunge," he said.

Land said he is pleased the court upheld most of the Pennsylvania

abortion restrictions, but he said the court's refusal to require married women to notify their spouses before getting an abortion is "an anti-marriage, anti-family decision, not to mention blatantly anti-male."

Whitehead agreed. "Under state laws, a wife can't even sell a used car owned with her husband without getting his signed consent," he said. "Surely state laws should be able to ask a wife to inform her husband before she takes the life of a child they co-generated."

Robert Parham, director of the Nashville-based Baptist Center for Ethics, a Southern Baptist think tank, predicted the court's decision will only further polarize the debate over abortion in America.

"The decision simply prolongs the controversy," Parham said. "I think the decision will marginalize many anti-abortion groups." It may also "galvanize" women in support of abortion rights if they feel a fundamental right has been taken away, he said.

Nancy Schaefer, an anti-abortion activist and trustee of the Christian Life Commission, agreed the debate over abortion will heat up in the wake of the court's decision. "I feel like the abortion issue will intensify in the state elections, and we can expect some battle royals in the state legislatures in the coming year," she said.

Schaefer suggested it is time for abortion foes to take the gloves off in their fight to abolish the practice.

"I think the time may have come for pictures of babies being aborted to be shown openly and publicly, so everyone can see how their heads are crushed and how their bodies are torn apart limb by limb," said Schaefer, director of the Atlanta-based Family Concerns Inc., which organizes pro-family action groups in local churches.

When graphic pictures of the Vietnam War began appearing on the evening news, Schaefer said, public opinion turned against the war effort. In the past, she said, anti-abortionists have "protected" the American public from such graphic depictions of abortion. But she added, "When the American public sees those pictures, I think then abortion will also come to an end."

Schaefer, a member of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, said she was not surprised the court declined to overturn Roe vs. Wade. "I was surprised they made this decision as emphatic as they did."

"I would like to have seen the United States Supreme Court overturn Roe outright," she added, "but if they had we might have had another riot on our hands."

Sociology professor Sarah Frances Anders agreed the effect of the Supreme Court decision will be to shift the abortion debate to the states, where more laws restricting abortion likely will be passed and tested in court.

Perhaps the country's most restrictive abortion law is in Anders home state of Louisiana, where legislators passed a measure making almost all abortions illegal. The law, which is awaiting court review and is not yet in effect, was designed to provide a direct challenge to Roe vs. Wade.

"I think it will be tested and fairly soon," Anders said of the Louisiana measure. While Anders, a Southern Baptist and professor at Louisiana College, describes herself as "definitely pro-life," she said the new Louisiana law is too restrictive.

"I would not take it quite as far because they have eliminated some extenuating circumstances," she said. Anders said abortion laws should not ignore the concerns of "those who are already here," namely women whose lives are threatened by a pregnancy or who will give birth to severely deformed infants who have little chance of survival.

"It's not as simple as black and white," she said.

Baptist ethics professor Ray Higgins defended the right of states like Pennsylvania to restrict abortion.

Higgins said the constitutional right to privacy -- the basis for the Roe vs. Wade decision -- "must be balanced with the public good," which gives states the right to restrict abortion because of the value society places on human life.

"The right to privacy and the public good must always be held in tension," said Higgins, assistant professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Higgins said those competing rights are out of balance in American society, as evidenced by the high number of abortions performed as a means of birth control. "Our society does not place a high enough value on human life," said Higgins, an associate of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

To settle the abortion debate, he said, Americans must decide "what values supersede the value of life in the womb." Abortion for the sake of birth control or convenience implies many Americans give high value to sexual and reproductive freedom, Higgins said, but "sexual freedom should not come at the expense of human life."

"In a large number of abortions this seems to be the issue," said Higgins, noting about three-fourths of abortions are performed on unmarried women.

Although "genuine Christians differ" over whether an unborn fetus is a person with the same value as post-natal life, Higgins said, "the burden of proof is on those who want to undervalue human life in the womb."

"But abortion is only one issue that illustrates we do not place a high enough value on human life," Higgins continued. Public policy on gun control, health care, criminal justice and war all reflect the value Americans place on life.

"Society is being hypocritical if we are going to make women bear the burden of our inconsistent value of human life," he charged. "How can we say that life is so valuable that a woman's right to abortion is to be restricted while ranking about 16th among industrialized nations in infant mortality?"

While conservative Christians are divided over "the hard cases" -- abortions that involve rape, incest, endangerment to the mother's life, and fetal abnormality -- they have not done enough to reduce the number of routine abortions, he said. "We have not been very pro-active in addressing the 90 percent of cases that are more birth control-related."

"Laws are one means for reducing the number of abortions but not the only means," he continued. "Christians need to be addressing the causes of abortion and working on the front end rather than seeing legislation as the solution to the abortion problem."

Parham agreed. Laws, court decisions and public debates focus on the "crisis point" at which pregnant women decide whether or not to have an abortion, he said. "What we must do to resolve the abortion crisis is step back and deal with the root causes and take pro-active actions," he said.

Although the Supreme Court approved most of Pennsylvania's restrictions on abortion, the decision "will not result in a dramatic decrease in abortions," predicted Phil Strickland, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

The court said Pennsylvania could require a 24-hour waiting period for abortions, parental consent for minors, informed consent for all others, and reporting requirements for abortion clinics.

"We need to realize that this decision does not authorize any legislative action that will result in a major reduction in the number of abortions," Strickland said.

While the Texas CLC "will pursue legislative options that the court leaves open," Strickland said, abortion foes must now focus on educational, preventive measures in local churches and individual families.

Sylvia Boothe, who directs the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's

work in abortion alternatives, agreed Christians cannot rely on a legislative solution to abortion.

Boothe, who helps churches set up crisis-pregnancy centers, said the recent court decision "probably will increase our opportunity to reach women who are in crisis." The court's approval of Pennsylvania's 24-hour waiting period particularly will aid her cause, she said. "A lot of abortion decisions are made in panic.... I think 24 hours can really make a difference."

She said she is pleased with the court decision because it demonstrates a trend toward reversing Roe. "I wish they had overturned it, but I feel it will be overturned. This is just another step."

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-- Ken Camp contributed to this story.

Abortion-rights bill still needed,
congressional supporters say

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Nobody won. That was the political posturing of groups on both sides of the abortion battle as the nation's high court reaffirmed the landmark decision recognizing a woman's right to privacy in abortion decisions and the state's interest in regulating abortions.

Congressional leaders, as well as representatives of special-interest groups and religious circles, reacted to the decision. Prior to the June 29 ruling, many abortion-rights advocates contended a legislative solution -- the Freedom of Choice Act -- would be necessary if the court overturned Roe vs. Wade.

Even though a narrow majority upheld the "essential holding" of Roe, proponents of the Freedom of Choice Act said Congress must act now to approve the legislation.

The bill (S. 25, H.R. 25) has been approved by subcommittees in the House and Senate and awaits committee action. The House Judiciary Committee was considering H.R. 25 at press time June 30. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, said that he would ask the committee to consider S. 25 July 1.

"Today's (Supreme Court) decision is a signal to the states that a wide range of previously unconstitutional restrictions on a woman's right to choose will now be held valid by the court," Kennedy said June 29.

"In this situation, the only responsible course is for Congress to act as soon as possible to pass the Freedom of Choice Act and restore to all the women of America what the Supreme Court today has taken from them."

Sen. Bob Packwood, R-Ore., had harsher words for the decision. "This is a classic sleight of hand. Up front, the court states it is upholding Roe. It then proceeds to decimate the very foundation of Roe, which is that abortion is a fundamental constitutional right. The court applies a so-called 'undue burden test,' under which it upholds every Pennsylvania restriction except one.

"In spite of what you may have heard today from those analyzing this case, it is beyond our worst fears," Packwood continued. "Here is a message I'd like to give to those in Congress who thought we might not need to go ahead with the 'Freedom of Choice Act.' It is urgent that we pass our legislation immediately. It is literally a matter of life or death for thousands of American women."

Congress has the votes to approve the Freedom of Choice Act, but

lawmakers apparently do not have the needed two-thirds majority to override an expected presidential veto.

For the most part, congressional opponents of the bill offered little reaction to the court's decision.

However, Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., called the ruling a rejection of the extremism of the abortion industry and a modest victory for mothers and their children.

Smith said the court "wisely upheld major portions of Pennsylvania's very modest safeguards that are designed to protect mothers and at least some unborn babies from the violence of abortionists."

"The affirmation of Roe was just plain wrong," Smith continued. "Nevertheless, today's ruling gives us cause for some hope that the day will dawn when unborn children are protected.... That the pro-abortion side is going ballistic over this ruling underscores just how extreme and radical they are."

Smith added that the ruling "continues the incremental progress we have made over the past two decades in re-establishing basic protections for the weakest and most vulnerable among us -- unborn babies."

Other congressmen objected to the ruling and endorsed the Freedom of Choice Act.

"Today is a dark day for all Americans," said Sen. Alan Cranston, D-Calif. "The Supreme Court has given government a continued go-ahead to intrude into the personal, private lives of American citizens.... The consequences of today's decision will be devastating to millions. In many states, cruel bureaucratic obstacles will deliberately be placed in the path of women seeking to terminate a pregnancy."

Rep. Barbara Kennelly, D-Conn., added: "The message is clear. Congress must pass the Freedom of Choice Act. Women, through their voices and votes, must let Congress and the president know that they will not stand for having their personal freedom taken away."

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Court strikes airport solicitation
but not literature distribution

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Government officials may ban in-person solicitation of funds but not distribution of literature in airport terminals, a sharply splintered U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 26.

At issue were bans on both activities that transportation officials sought to impose at the New York City area's three major airports. The regulations were challenged by members of the Hare Krishna faith.

The court voted 6-3 to uphold the ban on solicitation imposed by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, while voting 5-4 to strike the port authority's ban on the distribution and sale of literature.

The case hinged on whether airport terminals are considered public forums where free-speech activities can be restricted only for compelling reasons.

Five justices, led by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, held that airport terminals are not public forums and local officials needed to show only that their regulations were reasonable and not designed to suppress a particular viewpoint.

Rehnquist, joined by justices Byron White, Sandra Day O'Connor, Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, held that the regulation imposed by New York airport officials "reasonably limits solicitation."

The majority concluded it is reasonable to find that solicitation activity may be disruptive for airport customers.

While joining the Rehnquist-led majority in holding that airport terminals are not public forums and that New York's solicitation ban is reasonable and constitutional, O'Connor joined the court's four other members -- Anthony Kennedy, Harry Blackmun, David Souter and John Paul Stevens -- in holding that the ban on literature distribution is unconstitutional.

O'Connor said that "while the difficulties posed by solicitation in a non-public forum are sufficiently obvious...the same is not necessarily true for leafletting."

Noting that airport officials had leased space to banks, restaurants, retail stores and other commercial businesses, O'Connor wrote that the range of activities promoted by airport officials is "no more directly related to facilitating air travel" than those pursued by the Hare Krishna.

"Because I cannot see how peaceful pamphleteering is incompatible with the multipurpose environment of the...airports, I cannot accept that a total ban on that activity is reasonable without an explanation as to why such a restriction 'preserves the property' for the several uses to which it has been put."

In a concurring opinion, Kennedy reached the same results as O'Connor in upholding the ban on solicitation while striking the airport's rule against literature distribution and sales. But unlike O'Connor, Kennedy insisted airport terminals are public forums.

"In my view the airport corridors and shopping areas outside of the passenger security zones...are public forums, and speech in those places is entitled to protection against all government regulation inconsistent with public forum principles," Kennedy wrote.

Kennedy criticized the majority's conclusion that airports are not public forums as "flawed."

"It leaves the government with almost unlimited authority to restrict speech on its property by doing nothing more than articulating a non-speech-related purpose for the area, and it leaves almost no scope for the development of new public forums absent the rare approval of government," he wrote.

A dissenting opinion written by Souter and joined by Blackmun and Stevens agreed with Kennedy that airport terminals are public forums. But the three dissenters would have held that both the solicitation ban and the literature distribution prohibition are unconstitutional.

Souter noted that the court has held the "solicitation of money by charities to be fully protected as the dissemination of ideas."

Rehnquist, White, Scalia and Thomas dissented from the decision to uphold distribution of literature, noting that "leafletting presents risks of congestion similar to those posed by solicitation."

The court's decision affirmed rulings by the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

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-- By Larry Chesser

## Bush administration unveils new educational 'choice' plan

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Calling for revolution in education, the Bush administration unveiled June 25 a new version of an old plan to provide parents tax money to send their children to public, private or religious schools.

The proposal would provide $500 million in fiscal year 1993 for $1,000 scholarships to help low- and middle-income families send their children to

schools of their choice.

During a June 26 press briefing, administration officials said Congress probably will not approve the measure this year, but they said educational choice would be a top priority in a second Bush term.

Bush has been pushing education reform since April 1991 when he announced his "America 2000" strategy. While several elements of America 2000 were lauded, the choice proposal drew fire from congressional, educational and religious circles.

A centerpiece of "America 2000," Bush's choice proposal was rejected by the U.S. Senate and a House education committee. The Senate approved a major education bill (S. 2) allowing only public school choice. The House Education and Labor Committee approved a bill rejecting all educational choice proposals. A battle over the choice provisions is expected when the bill comes to the House floor.

James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, called Bush's new program "an election-year stunt."

"The American people have in repeated referenda rejected the idea of spending public money for private and parochial schools, either directly or indirectly through some voucher scheme," Dunn said. "There is a certain cruelty in suggesting such a plan which would in no way help the poorest parents and in many ways would damage public education."

Administration officials called the new plan the most ambitious choice proposal ever on the federal level. Education Secretary Lamar Alexander said the new plan is more sophisticated than last year's proposal, likening it to a new and improved 1992 automobile next to the Model T.

Alexander said the plan borrows a popular concept, the GI Bill. The administration called the new plan a "GI Bill for children," noting the GI Bill gave World War II veterans opportunity and consumer power to help create the best colleges and universities in the world.

The administration claims the bill would give young students the same opportunity and their parents the consumer power to create the best elementary and secondary schools in the world.

In addition, Alexander said the administration has tried to anticipate concerns with the new proposal and incorporate responses to them within the bill.

For example, some have criticized choice reform because they fear it will create "David Duke academies," he said. But the new bill incorporates anti-discrimination provisions, he said.

Another concern -- that choice plans violate the constitutional principle of church-state separation -- is not valid, Alexander said.

In a ceremony announcing the new plan, President Bush said opponents of government money going to religious schools are wrong: "This is aid to the families, not aid to institutions. And, again, if you set the clock back to the creation of that original GI Bill, no one told the GIs that they couldn't go to SMU or Notre Dame or Yeshiva or Howard."

An administration document defending the plan said, "The assistance can be used at a broad range of schools, and participation in the program is in no way based on religion, or on attendance at a religious school. It is unquestionably constitutional under the Supreme Court precedents."

A Baptist church-state specialist said the administration is relying on dubious precedents to speculate that the court might now approve a choice plan.

"The GI Bill and Pell Grants are different," said Brent Walker, associate general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee. "Federal assistance to post-secondary education has historically been treated differently from aid to pervasively sectarian primary and secondary schools."

Because parochial schools do not and cannot separate their educational

purpose from their religious mission, tax support for them violates constitutional principles, he added.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., chief sponsor of the education bill approved by the Senate, said, "The administration has given a souped-up name to its school-voucher scheme, but it's the same old warmed-over proposal that Congress has already rejected.

"It's a serious mistake to use federal tax dollars to support private schools. America's public schools need every penny they can get. Our goal in education reform is to improve the public schools, not abandon them."

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-- By Pam Parry

One in four Americans has left
childhood faith, poll finds

PRINCETON, N.J. (ABP) -- Nearly one-fourth of American adults have left the church of their childhood for another denomination or faith, the Gallup Organization reports.

Southern Baptist churches appear to benefit from this trend more than they are hurt by it.

Only 5 percent of people who said they had changed faiths left Southern Baptist churches for another faith. But 10 percent of those who said they had converted moved into Southern Baptist churches.

Overall, denomination-switching appears to benefit Protestant churches more than Catholic churches. While 81 percent of converts landed in Protestant churches, only 9 percent moved into Roman Catholic churches.

Also, 45 percent of those who have switched said they left a Protestant denomination, while 18 percent said they left the Roman Catholic church.

Among Protestants, smaller denominations taken as a whole are most likely to get switchers, followed by Methodists, Presbyterians and Southern Baptists.

Methodists also are the most likely to lose members who change faiths, the poll found. A total of 15 percent of those who said they had left the faith of their childhood exited the Methodist church, compared to 6 percent who said they used to be Presbyterians, 3 percent who used to be Lutherans, 5 percent who used to be Southern Baptists and 6 percent who were some other type of Baptist.

The most common reason for changing denominations is marriage, accounting for 26 percent of switches.

Other top reasons are:

-- A preference for the religious beliefs of the new church, 14 percent.

-- Moving or finding a more conveniently located church, 11 percent.

-- Influence of friends, relatives or children, 10 percent.

-- Dislike of the religious beliefs of the former church, 7 percent.

-- A religious experience with God, 5 percent.

The Gallup poll also found that Americans who have changed faiths or denominations are more likely to say religion is "very important" in their lives (71 percent) than people who have not changed faiths (58 percent).

The research was conducted in April 1992 through telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of adults 18 years and older.

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-- By Mark Wingfield

State Baptist papers may be
shielded from '93 postal hike

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A steep postal-rate hike for state Baptist newspapers and other non-profit mailers may be averted for fiscal year 1993 if an appropriations bill approved June 25 by a House committee clears the U.S. Congress.

The House Appropriations Committee approved a spending bill for the U.S. Postal Service, providing only $200 million of the $482 million needed for the non-profit mail subsidy, known as revenue foregone.

Revenue foregone reimburses the postal service for the non-profit mailers' share of overhead expenses. Non-profit rates reflect only the cost of handling that class of mail.

The $282 million shortfall could mean a 50 percent rate hike for state Baptist newspapers, except the committee approved an additional proposal to shield non-profit mailers from a rate increase for 1993. The proposal stipulates the postal service, rather than non-profit mailers, would pick up the $282 million difference in the amount needed and the amount appropriated.

Neal Denton, executive director of the Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers, said the alliance "welcomes the safety net" but stressed that non-profit mailers "need a permanent solution" from the Senate.

If the appropriations bill is approved by the House of Representatives, it will then be sent to the Senate for consideration. (Appropriation bills originate in the House).

If Congress does not approve protection for non-profit mailers, a rate hike could go into effect Oct. 1.

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-- By Pam Parry

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