
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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Congress works
to reduce crime

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Lawmakers determined to curb escalating violence across the country grappled with several anti-crime initiatives in the waning days of the first session of the 103rd Congress.

Working over the Nov. 19-21 weekend, both chambers approved a comprehensive crime bill, as well as a measure that would impose a nationwide waiting period for handgun purchases. Legislators also approved measures designed to curb violence at abortion clinics and domestic violence against women.

Both chambers approved different versions of the omnibus crime legislation (H.R. 3355), but the bill will not be ready for President Clinton's signature until next year. The Senate-House conference committee was not expected to iron out the differences in the bills until Congress returns in January.

By a 95-to-4 vote Nov. 19, the U.S. Senate approved the measure that would authorize more than \$22 billion over five years for a variety of anti-crime initiatives, including an additional 100,000 police officers and more prisons.

The bill also would ban the production and distribution of semi-automatic assault weapons, providing an exemption for guns used by sportsmen. Another provision would ban so-called "cop-killer bullets" -- those that can pierce armor.

Senators also adopted stiffer penalties for terrorism, drug trafficking, spousal abuse and sexual offenses against women. The bill provides for the death penalty for more than 50 federal offenses, such as killing a police officer or carjackings that result in death.

The Senate incorporated into the overall crime bill a previously free-standing bill (S. 11) designed to protect women from violence. It would impose an array of reforms: new rules of evidence that focus on the offender's conduct rather than the victim's character, funding for battered-women's shelters and a national family-violence hot line, and rape and violence prevention and education initiatives for schools and college

campuses.

The House earlier endorsed a similar version.

Lawmakers also approved:

-- The Brady Bill. The House approved Nov. 22 the conference report on the Brady Bill -- a measure that would require a national five-day waiting period before purchasing a handgun -- but final passage has been stalled in the Senate. Senate Republicans are displeased with the final language drawn up by a Senate-House conference committee.

Both chambers previously approved similar measures named for James Brady, a former White House press secretary who was wounded during an attempt to assassinate President Reagan in 1981. But the conference committee report opted for a provision in the House bill that differed from the Senate measure, effectively rejecting a compromise measure struck by senators.

The point of disagreement involves the duration of the waiting-period requirement. The House bill and subsequent final draft includes language to end the bill's waiting-period requirement after five years. Lawmakers hope that after a few years a national computerized system could be in place so that instant background checks could be made on potential handgun purchasers, nullifying the need for a waiting period.

Republican senators filibustered because they said that five years was too long for the waiting-period requirement to be in effect. To bring the matter to a vote, compromise language was drafted saying that the requirement would end after four years and that the U.S. attorney general would be empowered to extend it to five if deemed necessary.

When the conference committee dropped that language, Senate Republicans led by Bob Dole of Kansas objected. Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine, said that he will require senators to return after the Thanksgiving break if they do not dispense with the Brady Bill Nov. 23 before leaving town.

-- Abortion-clinic access. By voice vote, the House approved legislation designed to curb violence at abortion clinics by making such acts a federal crime. The Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (H.R. 796) would allow federal authorities to intervene and would provide fines and jail sentences for abortion protesters who intimidate or interfere with any woman trying to get an abortion or who destroy clinic property. Violent offenders would receive the stiffest penalties.

The Senate previously approved a similar version. The measure will not be ready for final approval until the next session.

-- Youth and handguns. The House unanimously approved the Youth Handgun Safety Act Nov. 20, which is designed to prohibit minors from buying handguns or ammunition (H.R. 3098). Exceptions were provided for sporting purposes and if there was adult supervision. A similar measure has been considered in the Senate, but final action will not be taken until next year.

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-- By Pam Parry

Social issues dominate
convention resolutions

(ABP) -- Baptist state conventions meeting in October and November passed resolutions dealing with an assortment of moral and social issues.

Among the hot topics:

-- Abortion.

Louisiana Baptists approved a resolution opposing the Freedom of Choice Act or other laws providing access to or funding for abortions. Messengers

amended a statement describing abortion as "an immoral act" which destroys human life to read "an immoral act of murder."

South Carolina Baptists also opposed the Freedom of Choice Act and supported state laws regulating abortion clinics and requiring informed consent for abortions.

Noting a recent Supreme Court ruling upholding a Mississippi law requiring parental consent for minors seeking abortions, Baptists in that state passed a resolution commending members of the Mississippi legislature for enacting the law in 1986.

Arkansas Baptists also approved a sanctity of human life resolution.

In Minnesota/Wisconsin, a resolution opposed abortion and urged "equal fervor" to encourage and help girls and women carry unwanted pregnancies to term.

Indiana, Missouri and New Mexico Baptists opposed the inclusion of abortion services in any national health-care reform plan. Oklahoma Baptists opposed the use of federal tax dollars to pay for abortions.

-- Gambling.

Alabama Baptists declared war on efforts to introduce legislation permitting casino gambling. Speakers warned of an "all out effort" by the gambling industry to pass a casino-gambling bill in 1994. Messengers unanimously adopted a position statement opposing casino gambling.

The Louisiana Baptist Convention opposed riverboat gambling in a resolution and called for local-option elections on state-sponsored gambling.

New Mexico Baptists opposed any state-supported lottery or video gambling and any gambling on Indian lands.

Kentucky Baptists opposed the legalization of casino and riverboat gambling, warning that legalized gambling "looms before Kentucky" as a potential "quick fix" for state budgets.

Baptists in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas also spoke in resolutions against gambling.

-- Sexual abstinence.

True Love Waits, a Baptist Sunday School Board program promoting sexual abstinence for teens, was endorsed in Baptist meetings in Arkansas, Illinois, Kansas-Nebraska, Kentucky, Missouri, Utah-Idaho, the Northwest Baptist Convention.

New Mexico Baptists adopted a resolution on sexual promiscuity, sexually-transmitted diseases, condom distribution and the "safe sex" message. Arkansas Baptists targeted "the humanistic 'safe sex' message" in a resolution.

-- Homosexuality.

South Carolina Baptists passed a resolution rejecting homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle, pronouncing it in "direct opposition to the teaching of Scripture."

Florida Baptists adopted a resolution encouraging voter registration and participation in an effort to remove from the state's constitution language which protects homosexuals from discrimination.

Oklahoma Baptists also spoke out against including homosexuality in civil-rights protections.

Virginia Baptists adopted a statement labeling homosexual behavior "sinful and unacceptable for Christians," closing a year-long debate about a 1992 resolution which urged ministry to homosexuals but stopped short of condemning their lifestyle.

-- Television.

Protesting "moral corruption ... sex and violence ... (and) irresponsibility under the guise of free speech" by networks, North Carolina Baptists adopted a motion designating May 1, 1994 as the "Great American TV

Turnoff Day." The state's Christian life and public affairs council will promote the emphasis.

Mississippi Baptists commended the state's five ABC affiliates for electing not to air the network's controversial "NYPD Blue" program. The Mississippi resolution said the show "features gratuitous sex and dehumanizing violence."

Arkansas Baptists also commended "responsible broadcasters" who chose not to air "NYPD Blue." They rejected an amendment which would have urged church members to boycott stations which air the program after a convention leader explained the resolution's intent was "to compliment those who took a stand."

Texas Baptists opposed television programs that promote immorality and urged boycotts of offending stations and advertisers.

-- Liquor.

North Carolina Baptists opposed a state law allowing liquor licenses in the western part of the state near the Blue Ridge Parkway.

New Mexico Baptists commended the 1993 state legislature for its driving-while-intoxicated reform law. The resolution asked the legislature to continue to address the continuing problem of alcohol-related traffic fatalities. The state leads the nation in per capita alcohol-related accidents.

Arkansas Baptists opposed alcohol and other drug use.

-- President Clinton.

While Clinton's social policies were the target of harsh criticism during last year's conventions, this year's resolutions were more benevolent toward the president.

Michigan Baptists pledged prayer for President Clinton and other government leaders. Arizona Baptists were called upon to "earnestly pray for and biblically submit to our government leaders" and appealed to "those in authority to affirm biblical morality in exercising their public office."

Utah-Idaho Baptists affirmed SBC stances opposing abortion on demand and homosexuals serving in the military and committed themselves to pray for President Clinton and other national leaders as they make decisions that "shape the moral fabric" of the nation.

-- The Cooperative Program.

The most popular topic of resolutions that was not a social issue was the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist Convention's unified budget.

Tennessee Baptists adopted a resolution affirming the Cooperative Program after messengers rejected an amendment discouraging participation in the rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Arizona Baptists offered "praise to the Lord for entrusting the Cooperative Program to Southern Baptists" and urged that nominees for state convention boards and committees come only from churches which give through the Cooperative Program.

Alabama, Georgia, Minnesota-Wisconsin, Ohio and Utah-Idaho also adopted pro-Cooperative Program resolutions.

-- Other issues.

A resolution passed by Louisiana Baptists urged every association and church to establish a committee for social and moral concerns or "at least designate a contact person." South Carolina Baptists approved a similar resolution, encouraging each of the state's 1,840 Baptist churches to organize a Christian life committee to inform members about critical issues and to suggest appropriate responses.

Louisiana Baptists also expressed concern that their state has been dubbed the "murder capital of the nation." They pledged to join in a cooperative effort to study and address the problem.

Messengers to conventions in Arkansas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, the Northwest and West Virginia approved resolutions opposing pornography.

The Baptist Convention of New England passed a resolution challenging churches to overcome and seek repentance for racism.

South Carolina Baptists opposed premeditated acts of euthanasia.

Arizona Baptists pledged "every means at our disposal" to assure the "dignity, personal welfare and fulfillment" of senior adults.

Illinois Baptists affirmed Christian family values and opposed the influence of cults and non-Christian religions.

Georgia Baptists addressed moral standards, outcome-based education and political involvement.

Kentucky Baptists endorsed Habitat for Humanity, an international, interfaith ministry which provides housing for low-income persons. Kentucky Baptists also adopted a resolution encouraging ministry to AIDS patients.

Wyoming Baptists backed their resolution committee's decision not to recommend a statement stronger than the SBC's 1993 stance on Freemasonry. The SBC statement recognized certain troublesome tenets but left participation in the Masonic lodge a matter of personal conscience.

New York Baptists deplored human rights violations in Haiti.

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-- By Bob Allen

State conventions debate
basis for cooperation

SAVANNAH, Ga. (ABP) -- A decision by a state Baptist nominating committee to make support of the Cooperative Program a qualification for leadership has sparked a full-blown polity debate in Georgia.

Messengers to the Georgia Baptist Convention, meeting Nov. 15-17 in Savannah, voted to appoint a committee to study what it means to be "in harmony and cooperation with the work and the purpose" of the state convention, their constitution's only requirement for membership.

The motion, by Floyd Roebuck, pastor of First Baptist Church of Rome, emerged from a dispute over a guideline used to determine who would be nominated to serve on state convention boards and committees.

Prior to the convention, the nominating committee decided to recommend for leadership positions only members of churches which contribute a minimum of 7 percent of their unrestricted receipts through the Cooperative Program, the unified funding mechanism for both the state and Southern Baptist conventions.

Roebuck, whose church gives money to the state convention but also sends a portion of its funds to the SBC-rival Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, charged that the committee's criteria disqualified "over half" of Georgia Baptist churches.

The motion asked that the criteria for determining the constitution's requirement for "harmony and cooperation" be based solely on involvement in the state convention and that qualified members of any cooperating church be eligible for membership on all the convention's boards, agencies and committees.

"This convention, like every other Baptist body, is autonomous," Roebuck said. "What should count for whether or not we are in harmony or cooperation is the amount of money and the kind of cooperation we give to this convention, not what we may do anywhere else."

Nominating committee chairman John Yarbrough told the Georgia Baptist

state paper, the Christian Index, that the 7 percent guideline was adopted after it was learned that members of the SBC Executive Committee represent churches averaging 7.23 percent in Cooperative Program giving. The average of all SBC churches is 9.3 percent.

Yarbrough defended the committee's decision to employ whatever selection procedures it deemed appropriate and said he was "very pleased the average giving of the people we nominated was 11.83 percent."

Yarbrough said he welcomes the study but disagrees with Roebuck's assessment that SBC participation is irrelevant to involvement in the state convention.

"There is a bond there through the Cooperative Program," Yarbrough said. "When our state convention cooperates through the national convention, we are cooperating, not connecting."

For the Georgia convention to alter that relationship "would be a very dangerous thing for missions support of Georgia Baptist causes," he added.

Most people who give to state mission programs are motivated "by the needs of home and foreign missions around the world," Yarbrough said. If those needs were divorced from in-state concerns, "I just believe in the long run our Georgia Baptist Convention would be hurt," he said.

The study committee will be appointed by the convention's president and chairmen of the state's executive and administration committees.

Georgia was not the only state where Baptists debated the basis for their cooperation.

In the two-state convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey, messengers approved a recommendation that members of their state executive board come from churches that evidence "consistent giving" to the Cooperative Program and suggested a 10 percent minimum for board members' churches.

Virginia Baptists decided not to require churches to contribute money to their state convention in order to participate in it. Some conservative churches have been bypassing the state coffers by sending all their missions money to the SBC. But the constitutional amendment narrowly failed to get the required two-thirds vote.

A related measure also failed, one that would have initiated a study of the term "cooperation" as used in the constitution to define membership. A handful of states passed resolutions affirming the Cooperative Program and urging churches to increase their giving.

Oklahoma Baptists went one step further, passing a resolution denouncing alternative funding methods that "have the effect of weakening the Cooperative Program" and SBC work. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was lambasted by the state convention president.

A similar slap at the Fellowship was debated at length in Tennessee, but messengers eventually defeated an amendment to a resolution that would have discouraged participation with the Fellowship.

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-- By Bob Allen. This story includes information from James Dotson.

South Carolina Baptists cut
hospital ties, strengthen others

COLUMBIA, S.C. (ABP) -- Messengers to the South Carolina Baptist Convention agreed to sever legal ties with their hospital system but took steps to prevent similar convention-related institutions from straying from

the fold.

The convention asked trustees of their other institutions -- three colleges, a newspaper, a foundation and homes for children and retirees -- to amend their constitutions to strengthen ties to the convention.

South Carolina Baptists will ask those institutions to recognize the convention's right to elect trustees and to approve the institutions' constitutional changes. Thirteen "trustee expectations" also were adopted, one of which defines the trustees' responsibility to protect "the convention's rights and interests."

Trustees of the South Carolina Baptist Hospital voted in August to empower themselves to elect their own successors, removing control of the hospital system from the Baptist convention, which has elected trustees since 1914.

Although convention officials originally called the hospital's action illegal and vowed to challenge it in court, they conceded such a legal battle would be poor stewardship and an unwanted distraction for the state's Baptists.

In October the convention's General Board approved an agreement that grants hospital trustees their freedom, provided the hospital continues to fund an array of medical, counseling and educational services for Baptists in the state. That assistance will cost the hospital \$3 million annually for three years.

The hospital also agreed that a majority of its trustees will continue to be South Carolina Baptists.

South Carolina Baptist Hospital consists of the 542-bed Baptist Medical Center in Columbia as well as medical centers in Easley and the Harbison area. The hospital is valued at \$182 million, according to The State newspaper of Columbia.

Hospital trustees said the break with the convention was necessary to keep up with coming changes in the health-care system. Because the Baptist convention had to approve policy changes for the hospital at its annual meetings, it sometimes took one to two years before the hospital could implement new programs, officials complained.

The move will cost the hospital about \$800,000 the convention gives the hospital each year, but that accounts for only .02 percent of the hospital's annual receipts of \$320 million.

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-- By Greg Warner

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ADDITION: When the Nov. 18 story "Moderates prevail in key ..." was issued, T. C. Pinckney was unavailable for comment. His remarks, from an interview Nov. 19, are offered here as an addition to that story.

Please substitute the following for the 16th and 17th paragraphs:

But T. C. Pinckney, a leader of that campaign, said Nov. 19 that most of the state-level elections are decided on a variety of issues and are not an up-or-down vote on the conservative movement.

Pinckney, a retired Virginia layman and SBC Executive Committee officer, said the fall elections could have been discouraging if conservatives had developed a timetable for extending their influence in the states. But, he emphasized, "There is no overall strategy or timetable."

"All of us look at it as a process that is out of our hands," he said. It will happen, he said, "if the Lord wants it."

Pinckney said most Baptists who don't support the "conservative resurgence" are Bible-believing people who have been misled or are uninformed about the scriptural basis for the movement.

"I am confident," he said, "that if and when these good-hearted, saved Christian folks are educated about what the Scripture says and what the issues are, they will make -- without manipulation -- good, sound decisions (and) support the conservative resurgence."

Pinckney and others organized at least three conservative strategy sessions in the past year in preparation for the fall conventions. The group's most recent meeting in Louisville, Ky., included retired Houston judge Paul Pressler and Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The two men are regarded as architects of the fundamental-conservative movement that won control of the SBC in the 1980s.

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Baptists help Tanzanian boy
replace arm lost to crocodile

By Jack Brymer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- As the oldest son in a Maasai family, 12-year-old John Meguliki of Tanzania bears a tremendous responsibility. Add a blind father and cultural taboos to the situation, and this is one kid who has had to become a man much too quickly.

It was while trying to fulfill one of those responsibilities -- providing water for the family -- that young John suffered a near-fatal crocodile attack almost two years ago which has jeopardized not only his stature within the family and village but even his survival.

That is changing, however, thanks in part to the partnership between Florida and Tanzanian Baptists and the generosity of the Baptist Medical Center and Foundation in Jacksonville, Fla.

Doctors in Jacksonville performed surgery Nov. 18 that will prepare John to receive an artificial arm to replace one lost in the battle with the crocodile.

In January 1992, John walked the five miles from his parents' hut in the village of Kiria to the Pangani River basin for water. As he collected the water, a crocodile attacked him, severing his right arm just below the elbow. Only a courageous fight spared him from instant death.

In all probability John would have died that day had it not been for Tim Tidenberg, a Southern Baptist missionary serving in Dar es Salaam, the capital city of Tanzania.

Tidenberg was visiting a Baptist church in the area. In fact, John Meguliki and his parents are members of that church, Kiria Baptist Church.

As Tidenberg was making his visits, an elder in the village stopped him and pled with him to help a young boy who had been attacked by a crocodile. When Tidenberg got to the small dispensary in the village, he discovered that John's arm was still bleeding profusely.

After finally getting the bleeding stopped, Tidenberg took John to Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center in Moshi -- a three-hour journey. It was near midnight, according to Tidenberg, when John received the first medication for pain.

At the medical center, doctors removed more of John's arm because it had

not been cared for properly. Two days later even more had to be removed because the arm had become infected; the youngster had received no antibiotics. Later, still more surgery was done to graft skin from the thigh onto the arm.

After several weeks, John returned to his village but found that his culture created complications of a different nature.

To the Maasai people, the right arm is used for everything -- butchering a cow, planting a garden, eating, etc. -- and the left arm is used only for unclean activities.

John had lost his right arm and therefore came to be viewed as a burden to the family and village, Tidenberg said. That meant he would be the last to receive food and medical care.

Last June, just a few days before the Tidenbergs departed for the States on furlough, John's parents said they had a gift for the Tidenbergs -- a practice not uncommon before a missionary leaves on furlough.

"We were amazed at their gift," Tidenberg said. "It was their son. They said they were not able to care for his needs as they should, and that we were now his parents."

Tidenberg said he and his wife, Annie, assured them of their continued help and support but said John needed to remain with his own family and tribe. "As we were his new parents, they accepted our decision and took John home," said Tidenberg.

Prior to leaving for furlough, the Tidenbergs were able to get John into the small grade school in the village where he lives. Though he is older, John has had no formal education. The Maasai have been slow to educate their people and it has been only in recent years, according to Tidenberg, that young Maasai children have been permitted to study.

When they returned from furlough, the Tidenbergs visited with John and found him to be doing quite well in school. The head teacher has given him special attention. But lingering physical problems still plague the youngster.

While John's arm has healed quite well from his injury, the bone continues to grow, causing the skin to break open. All the doctors in Tanzania could do, Tidenberg said, is cut the bone as it grows, making it impossible for John ever to get a prosthesis.

In addition to the pain and infection in the arm, John suffers considerable pain in his leg where the skin was taken to graft onto his arm, said Tidenberg.

In June, while in Tanzania to explore the partnership between the Florida Baptist Convention and Tanzania Baptists, Florida Baptist leaders were told of the youngster's plight.

Upon returning home, Jim Goodson, director of the Florida Baptist missions division, shared what he had discovered in Tanzania with Bill Mason, president and chief executive officer of Baptist Medical Center in Jacksonville.

Himself a former Southern Baptist missionary to Tanzania, Mason arranged to provide the medical care for John, including an artificial arm. The state convention paid for John's airfare.

John arrived in Jacksonville Nov. 1, accompanied by Tidenberg, who is serving as translator for the boy.

John faces second surgical procedure in December before receiving his prosthesis. He hopes to return to Tanzania soon after with a new arm.

Fellowship receipts
low in October

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship received less money in October than any other month this year -- \$678,063.

While Fellowship receipts for the first nine months of the year grew 63 percent over the same period last year, receipts in October 1993 were barely higher than October 1992 -- up 3.7 percent.

An unusually high contribution total in October 1992 explains some of the difference. But the October 1993 total -- which only became available Nov. 23 -- represented a 14 percent drop from September.

Fellowship officials said they have no explanation for the sudden turnaround, but neither are they worried. "I am not concerned," said Cecil Sherman, Fellowship coordinator.

Receipts for November showed an increase after only three weeks, he said, and the Fellowship's year-to-date performance overshadows a one-month slump.

In 10 months this year, the Fellowship has taken in \$8.5 million, 16 percent more than in all of 1993. Sherman said receipts should surpass the goal of \$10 million by year's end. Last year the organization of Baptist moderates took in \$7.3 million.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established in 1990 by Southern Baptists displeased with the current conservative direction of the Southern Baptist Convention and its agencies.

The Fellowship's three funding plans allow churches and individuals to bypass the Cooperative Program, the SBC funding plan, and to withhold funds from Southern Baptist agencies of which they disapprove.

Gifts to the Fellowship support a variety of Fellowship mission ventures, as well as Fellowship-endorsed agencies and organizations. Critics within the SBC, however, say the Fellowship's growth is coming at the expense of SBC programs.

Indeed, the Fellowship's contributors are directing more and more of their money away from traditional SBC causes and toward the Fellowship's own efforts. In 1991, 59 percent of contributions were designated for Southern Baptist agencies. That percentage has fallen to 26 percent so far this year.

Meanwhile, 57 percent of 1993 contributions have been targeted for the Fellowship's own programs, such as the organization's missions venture. An additional 17 percent has gone to state Baptist conventions and Fellowship-endorsed agencies and organizations.

"The Fellowship's vision for doing missions and ministry is taking root in Baptist churches across the country," said Sherman. "While the exact form this vision will take is still being shaped, the fact that CBF will live and even thrive is more and more apparent."

Much of the Fellowship's growth this year has come from its global missions offering, begun for the first time late last year to support the organization's growing missions program. The Fellowship raised \$1,935,000 toward its \$2 million goal, most of which was received in the first three months of 1993.

This year's offering, kicked off in October, has a \$3 million goal.

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-- By Greg Warner

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