

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

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

\*\*\*\*\*  
Editor: Greg Warner

Phone: (904) 262-6626

Fax: (904) 262-7745  
\*\*\*\*\*

February 10, 1994

IN THIS ISSUE:

- \* Wolfe to be SBC candidate; Jim Henry still deciding
- \* Trustees, staff pursue 'fix' at Baptist Sunday School Board
- \* FMB trustees plan more out-of-town meetings
- \* Keith Parks draws ire of FMB trustees again
- \* Home Mission Board trustees won't reopen Masonic study
- \* Senate approves another school-prayer amendment
- \* Souter refuses to block Pennsylvania abortion law
- \* Wife of New York staffer killed by drunk driver

Wolfe to be SBC candidate;  
Jim Henry still deciding

By Greg Warner

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- Southern Baptists may choose between two prominent conservative pastors in electing their next president.

Fred Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., announced Feb. 8 he will be nominated for the post when the Southern Baptist Convention meets in June.

And Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in the host city of Orlando, Fla., said he is giving the presidency serious consideration, despite Wolfe's announcement.

Wolfe, chairman of the powerful SBC Executive Committee, is the first to throw his hat into the ring. His nomination was announced by former president Jerry Vines Feb. 8 during a national Bible conference at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., where Vines is co-pastor.

The annual Bible conference has launched several successful presidential nominees, including Adrian Rogers in 1986, Vines in 1988 and Morris Chapman in 1990.

Wolfe, who was not a scheduled speaker for the conference, flew in for the announcement, said Douglas Pigg, church administrator at the Jacksonville church. He was introduced and endorsed by Vines.

For months both Wolfe and Henry have been rumored as likely candidates to succeed Houston pastor Ed Young, who has served his allowed two terms. Henry, however, said he has not made a decision.

"I'm going to make a decision shortly," he told Associated Baptist Press Feb. 7. "It won't be long."

Henry's name has surfaced several times in the past decade as a

potential candidate but his nomination has never materialized. "This is the first time that I've prayed seriously about it," he said. "It just is on my heart."

The location of the annual meeting in his hometown of Orlando would be a decided advantage for Henry, but the 56-year-old pastor said that's not his primary consideration. "I just want God's will to be done for our convention and in my life."

Wolfe, also 56, declined to talk to Associated Baptist Press but released a statement through Baptist Press, the news service operated by the Executive Committee.

He said a group of 60-70 conservatives asked him to allow his nomination. He since sought advice and received support from several recent SBC presidents, he said.

Henry told ABP he too has been encouraged by some SBC leaders to allow his nomination, but he added, "I'd rather not divulge who."

Both Henry and Wolfe have been leaders in the conservative political movement among Southern Baptists.

Although Henry has shied away from overt politicking, he was one of four key endorsers of Chapman's candidacy in 1990. Wolfe has been more visible in the political fray and was considered the conservatives' likely presidential candidate in 1990 before key leaders of the movement picked Chapman instead.

Conservative insiders say Wolfe has earned his shot at the post, particularly through his service on the Executive Committee. Others say Henry is the logical choice because of the convention's location in Orlando and Henry's record as a strong supporter of the Cooperative Program, the SBC's central budget.

The Cooperative Program, now in its third straight year of decline, is one factor likely to surface in the debate. Critics say conservative churches, traditionally low in Cooperative Program support, have not taken up the slack of moderate churches that reduced or diverted their funding as conservatives solidified their hold on the denomination in recent years.

First Baptist of Orlando has been a consistent leader in Cooperative Program funding, leading all SBC churches in CP contributions in 1992. The 10,000-member church gave \$843,732 in 1993, or 13 percent of undesignated receipts. Henry has been pastor of the church for 16 years.

Cottage Hill Church, where Wolfe has been pastor for 23 years, gave \$183,333 to the CP in 1993, church officials said. But the 8,800-member church has been below the national average in Cooperative Program percentage giving.

Wolfe told members of the Executive Committee last September that the church gives about 5 percent of its receipts to the CP. He pledged to improve that record by half a percent a year until the church reached 10 percent.

The election is not expected to attract a formidable candidate from among SBC moderates, who have lost every presidential election since 1979 and have since eschewed the political battle.

That leaves conservatives to determine among themselves who will hold the SBC's top elected position. While conservatives traditionally have united behind a single candidate, their unthreatened control of the denomination has prompted multiple candidates in recent years.

In 1992, when Young was elected to his first term, there were three

nominees, two with close ties to the conservative faction.

Henry said he supports the 15-year-old conservative swing in the SBC. "Whoever is the next president should continue to build on that," he said. "There are some churches on the bubble who would like to see that we are still moving forward. We won the battle for the Bible. Now where are we going?"

Henry said Wolfe's candidacy would not keep him from being nominated, but he downplayed the idea of competition. "Fred's a fine person. I'm not entering this against anybody."

-30-

Trustees, staff pursue 'fix'  
at Baptist Sunday School Board

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Sunday School Board trustees elected a 46-year-old Texas oil company executive to serve as chief financial officer of the Southern Baptist Convention's publishing arm Feb. 8.

President Jimmy Draper hailed Ted Warren's election as vice president of the board's business services group as an important step in a long-term goal of reclaiming lost customers and re-establishing the image of the 103-year-old board as a provider of quality materials and services.

In his report to trustees, Draper expressed "optimism about the present and future" based on the board's history of success, its strong financial base and its guiding vision statement. Stories of successful products and projects buoyed spirits throughout the Feb. 7-8 trustee meeting at the board's Nashville, Tenn., headquarters.

Trustees completing their service on the board, including Chairman Dan Collins, an attorney from Greer, S.C., waxed eloquent in expressing their esteem for Draper, who became president in 1991. Eight years ago, "board meetings were miserable," Collins told Associated Baptist Press.

The adversarial relationship that existed between conservative trustees and Draper's predecessor, Lloyd Elder, has melted into a strong collegiality, and trustees took numerous opportunities during meeting sessions to voice their confidence in Draper's leadership.

Enough concerns remained, however, to temper trustees' elation. While total revenue for the board in 1992-93 grew 2.8 percent, to more than \$208 million, they remained 2 percent below budget, Draper said.

Also, dated curriculum sales, the board's largest revenue-producing line, continue a precipitous but apparently slowing decline. "This is our cash cow," Jerry Rhyne, director of the business and finance department, told trustees.

Rhyne projected a 4 percent decline in unit sales during the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

While dated literature sales have softened for several years, a string of declines ranging from 4 percent to 6 percent dates back a year and a half.

Those declines coincide with the establishment of Smyth & Helwys, an independent publishing house offering alternative literature primarily for Baptists displeased with the more conservative direction of the Sunday

School Board and the SBC.

One estimate is that Smyth & Helwys has claimed about 3 percent of the board's total customers. Each 1 percent decline in unit sales for dated curriculum, Rhyne said, translates to a \$600,000 loss from the bottom line.

Smyth & Helwys, however, is but one of 27 major competitors monitored by the board, said Gene Mims, vice president for the board's church growth group.

A greater challenge, he said, is an industrywide change in buying patterns. Most Southern Baptists once looked to the board as their sole provider of church materials. "Wake up," he urged trustees. "That's not where we're living."

Historically, Mims said, a handful of high-revenue products have subsidized others that earned less or lost money. To succeed, the board must develop more income-producing materials and must shy away from high-cost, low-return ventures. "These are tough decisions," Mims said.

Mims urged trustees to gauge success over the long haul. "There are no short-term solutions for the Baptist Sunday School Board," he said. "You don't just adjust a few things and get back to the top when you've let your market erode."

Rhyne said in some cases the board is competing with itself. Churches are ordering an undated board product, Henry Blackaby's "Experiencing God," at the rate of 1,000 a day. Some report they are using the program for Sunday school, replacing dated literature with a higher profit margin.

Total sales of "Experiencing God" now exceed 500,000 copies, Mims said. Sales for the Life Way product line are projected at \$1.3 million in '93-'94, nearly double last year.

Harry Piland, director of the Bible teaching-reaching division, reported that market research is being done for redesigned Life and Work adult literature, scheduled to debut this fall, which he said will be "the best."

Board members also heard a detailed report about plans to renovate or relocate outdated and poorly located Baptist Book Stores during the next two years. Five new stores have been completed, said Chuck Wilson, vice president for trade and retail markets. Plans call for a dozen new stores to be built this year and next and about 20 stores to undergo extensive remodeling.

Wilson also described the remarkable success of the board's "Secret Adventures" video. Approximately 100,000 copies of the first episode have been sold. The series, which combines live action and animation in a setting involving junior high youth and promoting biblical values, has drawn attention from the retail community.

A second episode of "Secret Adventures" is out, and a family of "Secret Adventures" products, such as T-shirts and a game, are being developed, Wilson said.

Draper reported that a corporate overhead study that led to staff reductions in 1993 will save approximately \$2.4 million this year.

Despite that savings, Draper said, the board is behind projections for new dollars to be plowed into new ventures. He predicted a time frame of three-to-five years "to get where we need to be, both financially and in terms of consistently providing materials and services that meet the changing needs of people and churches."

Warren's election as chief financial officer and vice president for

the business services group brings to full strength Draper's executive team of Warren, Mims and Wilson.

Warren succeeds E. V. King, the last vice president to serve under Elder. King resigned last August when a reorganization shifted more authority to the office than he reportedly was comfortable assuming.

Warren has worked with oil production companies in Texas since 1968. He was most recently chief operating officer of W.R. Grace Company, a Dallas drilling firm.

He is a member of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas and has taught Sunday school, "Experiencing God," Continuing Witness Training and has been a deacon.

Asked to describe his views on Scripture, Warren said while he possesses a layman's understanding of inspiration, "the Baptist Faith and Message is something I can sign my name to."

"If you want to make it a little more conservative, I can live with that," he quipped.

Asked about abortion, he said he views the act as "taking a life."

Trustees rejected a recommendation by staff to discontinue publication of the "Growing Churches" periodical, citing low circulation and unfavorable evaluation in surveys.

Trustee Danny Strickland, pastor of Parkway Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., countered: "This agency or somebody needs to produce something that hammers away at church-growth principles. "Staff members responded that articles on church growth would be emphasized in other periodicals.

Trustees asked staff to continue to publish the magazine and bring to the board's September meeting a new plan for promoting church growth.

Trustees in committee also voted down a recommendation by staff that a building next door to the board's historic Frost Building be purchased and demolished to improve visibility and access to the Sunday School Board.

In turning back the proposal, trustees cited the board's overall financial situation, and particularly a previous vote to increase literature prices 3 percent for 1994-95. However, they voted to convey continued interest in the purchase at some point in the future.

Kirk Humphreys, president of Century Investments, Inc., in Oklahoma City, Okla., was elected new chairman of the board. Vice chairman Jerry Sutton, pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, and secretary Roy Miller of Lexington, Ky., were re-elected.

-30-

FMB trustees plan more  
out-of-town meetings

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Southern Baptists outside Virginia will have more opportunities to see their missionaries appointed under a plan adopted by trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Feb. 9.

Board members agreed to reduce from six to five the number of yearly FMB meetings, and will hold three of those meetings away from their Richmond, Va., headquarters.

Currently the board regularly meets out of town only in April, although occasionally trustees conduct business and appoint missionaries in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Other meetings are held in October, December, February, June and August.

"It's time to respond to the many invitations we get to hold our meetings in other cities," said trustee Steve Hardy of Burlington, N. C., who chairs a committee examining ways to streamline trustee operations. "This is an opportunity to go to Southern Baptists and allow them to see missionary appointments."

The plan -- which is expected to be effective by the summer of 1995 -- eliminates the three-day June and August meetings, replacing them with about a weeklong midsummer meeting in a retreat setting, probably at Baptist conference centers in Ridgecrest, N. C., or Glorieta, N. M.

The October meeting -- which focuses on approval of the FMB's budget -- would continue to be held in Richmond, as would either the December or February meeting. Trustees agreed a sixth annual meeting would be arranged if SBC leaders requested an appointment service during the denomination's June convention.

The new schedule did not receive unanimous support and was adopted only after unsuccessful attempts to refer it back to committee and to replace it with a substitute motion.

Some trustees expressed concerns about increased costs and the possibility of fewer opportunities for trustee approval of missionary candidates. Others appeared uncertain how the altered schedule would fit into future recommendations expected from Hardy's committee in the next few months.

"We're probably going to increase our costs," warned Bill Sutton of McAllen, Texas. "I don't oppose this idea, but we need to be clear about this."

"I would agree," acknowledged Hardy. "I don't think you can do this without increasing costs."

However, FMB President Jerry Rankin said costs could be minimized by meeting in "hub cities" to which airfare is economical, holding appointment services in church sanctuaries rather than rented arenas, and lodging trustees and staff in moderate-priced hotels.

"The benefits in public relations and exposure will far offset the increased costs," he maintained.

Thurmon Bryant, vice president for mission personnel, asked if fewer meetings would create backlogs in clearing missionary candidates through the approval process.

FMB trustees meet six times a year -- more than the trustees of any other SBC agency -- in part to keep the flow of missionary appointments running smoothly. Missionaries must receive trustee approval before they can serve.

The board appointed 498 missionaries in 1993 -- the highest in any one year -- and administrators expect record numbers of appointments this year as well.

"Our main concern has been keeping [missionary] candidate appointments moving," said Hardy, adding he believed the schedule change will not slow the process. He said his committee may recommend that all trustees -- rather than half, as is currently the case -- sit on mission personnel subcommittees, which oversee the missionary-selection process.

That recommendation, if approved, would require groups of trustees to make at least one trip to Richmond between board meetings for committee sessions, a prospect which concerned some trustees who wanted more specifics before committing to it.

"This proposal is still in the formative stage. I think it would be premature to vote on this," said LeRoy Smith of Houston, who asked that the proposal be referred back to committee. His suggestion and another to accept the revised schedule as a "matter of information" rather than as binding action were defeated on hand votes.

In other action, trustees approved a comprehensive strategy for utilizing volunteers on the mission field. In recent years, the benefits and drawbacks of volunteerism have been regularly debated in trustee committee sessions.

The growing number of Southern Baptists eager to participate in short-term mission trips has overwhelmed career missionaries trying to carry out their own ministries while coordinating the activities of volunteer groups. Trustees have been reluctant to ignore offers of service from church members who support the FMB, but equally reluctant to unleash a wave of volunteers on mission fields with limited resources and personnel.

The new volunteer strategy acknowledges the "central focus of the Foreign Mission Board's work is based on sending career missionaries, but it also recognizes that the needs of our world are so vast that they require a comprehensive strategy that makes maximum use of all Southern Baptist resources, including volunteers."

Each mission, or group of missionaries in a country or region, is encouraged to develop a volunteer plan "that complements rather than compromises its local indigenous strategy."

In addition, missionaries will be asked to assign personnel to coordinate the work of volunteers; training in the use of volunteers will be added to orientation sessions for new missionaries; and written agreements will be obtained from all volunteer groups delineating responsibilities and restrictions.

In his report to the board, Rankin cited recently released figures showing growth in most FMB ministries, but admitted the statistics do not "put us on track" to reach the goals of Bold Mission Thrust, the Southern Baptist plan to share the gospel with every person on earth by the year 2000.

"However, God does not move by human increments, but his Spirit is like the wind which blows where it will, and we cannot tell from whence it comes nor where it goes."

Rankin pledged continued commitment to Bold Mission Thrust goals, which were "born in the heart of God."

"I want to affirm, as clearly and strongly as I can, that these last six years of the century will be given to meeting Bold Mission Thrust. We will analyze the methods, mobilize the resources, organize the manpower, revitalize the strategies and emphasize God's power in order to evangelize the world now."

In other business, trustees:

-- Named 49 new mission workers during a Feb. 8 appointment service, bringing the total mission force to 3,958. Seven of the new appointees are children of missionaries. Others include David Rogers, son of former SBC president Adrian Rogers, and Phil Wakefield, son of Bill Wakefield, FMB

vice president for international outreach.

-- Learned of the upcoming retirements of three staff members. Alan Compton, 64, vice president of communications and a 33-year veteran of the board, will retire Dec. 31.

Board chairman John Jackson named a five-member committee to seek a successor to Compton. Bill Sutton will chair the panel. Other members are Stephen Davis of Russellville, Ark.; Sam Friend of Bothell, Wash.; Paul Pressler of Houston; and Lawson Swearingen of Shreveport, La.

John Cheyne, 64, a key leader in the FMB's worldwide human needs ministry who began working for the board in 1954, will retire in March, as will Minette Drumwright, 63, director of the international prayer strategy office.

-30-

Keith Parks draws ire  
of FMB trustees again

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Former Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks drew the ire of FMB trustees Feb. 9 in a continuing war of words over the financial security of the agency he led for 12 years.

Trustee Ron Wilson of Thousand Oaks, Calif., charged Parks with attempting to "harm the Lottie Moon Christmas offering and gain support for the missionary enterprise" of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which Parks now serves as global missions coordinator.

The board subsequently approved a motion to "refute" comments by Parks and Harlan Spurgeon, another former FMB staffer who is now Parks' assistant, that the board has adequate resources to support missionaries if FMB income drops due to increased contributions to the CBF.

Earlier in their meeting, trustees rescinded action taken last year to dedicate a sesquicentennial history of the Foreign Mission Board to Parks. Trustees denied the action was vindictive. The book will be dedicated to all former presidents of the board as well as current president Jerry Rankin.

In a statement read to trustees, Wilson said Parks' "misleading statements" created "questions concerning needed support for the Foreign Mission Board."

"If the FMB has adequate funds and is not in need of additional funding, when did this situation arise?" he asked. "... For 12 years [Parks] indicated to Southern Baptists that we were short of money and that we needed more money in order to carry out the mission work of the Lord for the FMB .... Was he misleading the trustees and the churches or our convention when he made pleas or is he misleading people now with his current statements?"

Parks told ABP that he and Wilson are "speaking on two different subjects."

"I was responding to a question of what happens to the missionaries if funding is diminished," said Parks. "If there is an emergency the board has funds to fund that emergency. I was not saying the board ought to dip into reserves for the current budget."

He noted he has written letters to board administrators -- including Rankin -- to clarify his remarks and noted a joint explanatory letter from him and Spurgeon has been published in some state Baptist newspapers.

"I'm disappointed nobody [at the trustee meeting] said anything to clarify the confusion."

The sesquicentennial history of the board is being written by William Estep, church history professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and is expected to be published this fall.

Last October a trustee in a meeting of the board's strategy committee said he was uncomfortable that the book would be dedicated to Parks in light of his comments on FMB funding and other matters. Strategy committee members agreed with him and asked the policy committee to reconsider the dedication.

At this month's meeting, policy committee chairman Bill Hall of Danville, Ky., offered his panel's recommendation that the book be dedicated to the 10 presidents who have led the agency since 1846.

Hall denied the change was aimed at Parks. "We felt that to be fair about it we needed to pay tribute to all the men," he told ABP. "This is a comprehensive history not just of 12 years but of 150 years."

-30-

Home Mission Board trustees  
won't reopen Masonic study

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The Home Mission Board will not reopen the debate over Freemasonry, despite a request to do so from one of its trustees.

That was the verdict from the HMB's executive committee, which adopted a resolution Feb. 8 affirming the Southern Baptist agency's report on Masons and its handling of the two-year dispute.

The vote did not please trustee Walter Collett or Larry Holly, the Texas physician who has led the fight against the influence of Masons in Southern Baptist life.

"We agreed to have a blessed disagreement," said Collett, who presented his concerns to the trustees' administrative committee in private Feb. 8 before the executive committee took up the matter later in the day.

Collett, pastor of Covenant Baptist Church in Columbia, Md., charges that Masons teach "the heresy of universalism," the belief that all people will go to heaven eventually; that the HMB's 1993 report on Freemasonry implies individual conscience, not the Bible, should guide Baptists in deciding about Masonic membership; and that the manner in which HMB trustees adopted the report last March violated parliamentary procedure.

But the executive committee resolution, adopted with only one dissenting vote, affirmed the HMB's report, as well as "the actions and statements of its president, Dr. Larry Lewis, and the Home Mission Board's directors and staff."

The HMB fulfilled the task assigned by Southern Baptist Convention messengers in 1992 to study Freemasonry, the resolution said, and the results of the study were "overwhelmingly approved" by SBC messengers a

year later.

Last June the SBC approved a recommendation from the Home Mission Board that said while some Masonic teachings are incompatible with Christianity, the issue of membership in a Masonic group is "a matter of personal conscience."

Masons boast 3.5 million members nationwide, including an estimated 1.3 million Southern Baptists. Critics blame several recent church disputes on the inordinate influence of Masons.

After the Feb. 8 executive committee meeting, trustee leaders said the Home Mission Board needs to put the Freemasonry issue to rest.

"I'm tired of spending hours and hours discussing Freemasonry," said trustee chairman Brad Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church of Duncan, Okla. "We need to close this thing and get on with what we're here for."

Collett told Associated Baptist Press he will pursue no further action by trustees. But the issue won't go away, he warned, because the SBC action is being interpreted by some as an endorsement of Masons.

"The (SBC-approved) recommendation is not understood the way the executive committee and the (HMB) administration understands it," he said. "There is a disjunction between what the executive committee intends the recommendation to say and what it does say."

"Unless we clarify it, we will continue to have to deal with it," he added. "We all want to bring closure to this. We just don't agree on what is appropriate closure."

Collett said the HMB should remove its 110-page "Study of Freemasonry" from circulation, issue a clarification "that personal conscience should not be final arbiter" of Masonic membership, and allow a minority report from trustees who disapprove of the HMB report and the way it was adopted by trustees.

After hearing Collett Feb. 8, the administrative committee made no recommendation to the trustee executive committee. But Walter Carpenter of Houston, a member of the executive committee but not the smaller administrative group, introduced the resolution affirming HMB handling of the affair.

In the final paragraph of the resolution, the executive committee "deplores any statements attacking the Christian integrity and motives of the Home Mission Board's directors and staff or any implications the report was developed under the supervision of Masons and that fear of financial repercussions caused us to compromise on this issue."

The target of that denunciation was not clear. The executive committee did not identify the source of those charges, reported Martin King, HMB director of public relations.

"If it was directed at me ... they misunderstood my motives," Collett said.

"I suspect they are talking about me," said Larry Holly, "but I don't think the charge holds."

Holly, although not present for the executive committee meeting, has written Lewis numerous times to complain about the HMB study and is publishing a 365-page book -- his third on the topic of Masons -- analyzing the HMB's handling of the dispute.

"I never told them they were dishonest," Holly told ABP. "What I said was they have done a poor study and they need to admit that."

Among Holly's charges: the HMB's 110-page "Study of Freemasonry" is

not scholarly and is at times inaccurate; lead HMB researcher Gary Leazer was prejudiced in favor of Masons; the study was "developed under the scrutiny" of Masonic author Jim Tresner; and the study contradicts the HMB's subsequent six-page report which was later approved by the HMB and SBC.

"The executive committee's praise of its own work rings hollow in the face of the obvious deficiencies of the HMB's handling of the study of Freemasonry."

-30-

#### Senate approves another school-prayer amendment

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Senate has adopted its second school-prayer amendment in a week, and school officials may face more confusion than ever if the measures become law.

The Senate approved Feb. 8 by voice vote an amendment stipulating school boards cannot lose federal funds if they adopt constitutional provisions related to school prayer.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., said he offered the amendment to neutralize some of the impact of one offered by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. The Helms prayer amendment was attached to the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (S. 1150) -- the Clinton administration's proposal that would provide more than \$420 million in education funds and establish education goals to be met by the year 2000.

The legal impact of Helms' amendment, if it becomes law, is uncertain, since it would not expand opportunities for school prayer beyond what is already permitted by federal court interpretations of the Constitution.

But opposing senators and representatives of religious-liberty agencies expressed concern about the amendment's practical impact. School officials fearful of losing federal dollars could be pressured into sanctioning more than "constitutionally protected" prayer, they said.

Levin said his amendment assures school boards that adopt constitutional policies relative to prayer in school that "they are not going to find their federal funds cut off."

Levin said the Helms amendment "put a club to heads of local school boards to protect the rights of only one group of students: the group wishing to have organized prayer in school."

His amendment, Levin said, was designed to remove some of the threat of the previous measure.

Since the early 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court has barred school-sponsored religious exercises in public schools.

Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel Brent Walker said the Levin Amendment "doesn't do a whole lot. It does not nullify Helms. At best it will give school administrators, who are trying to do the right thing, some comfort in the close case."

"The ideal solution is to delete both amendments in the conference and pass the bill without either amendment."

But officials of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission voiced

support for the Helms Amendment. While they agreed the amendment "does not expand the scope" of school prayer, it does punish those schools that try to restrict constitutional prayer. "... Many school boards continue to refuse access to prayer," the CLC said in a prepared statement.

The U.S. House of Representatives previously approved a similar education bill without any school-prayer amendments. A House-Senate conference committee will iron out the differences.

In a related matter, the Senate defeated an amendment, 52-41, that would have provided \$30 million to demonstrate the use of vouchers to help low-income parents send their children to public, private or religious schools.

-30-

-- By Pam Parry

Souter refuses to block  
Pennsylvania abortion law

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Pro-choice advocates have lost another round in their bid to challenge the constitutionality of Pennsylvania's restrictive abortion statute.

Supreme Court Justice David Souter declined Feb. 7 to bar enforcement of Pennsylvania abortion restrictions while opponents continue a legal challenge.

In a six-page opinion, Souter indicated the Supreme Court is unlikely to hear further challenges to the law until it takes effect. But, he said, the law's constitutionality could be tested once it is enforced.

In 1992, a sharply split Supreme Court ruled that most of the law's restrictions, as written, do not place an "undue hardship" on a woman seeking an abortion. The court upheld provisions requiring informed consent, a 24-hour waiting period, record keeping and parental consent but struck down a spousal-notification requirement.

The Supreme Court sent the case back to the federal district court, which renewed its decision to block Pennsylvania from enforcing the law. But the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the district court, sending opponents of the law back to the Supreme Court seeking an emergency order to stop enforcement. As circuit justice for the 3rd Circuit, Souter had jurisdiction over the emergency request.

To stop enforcement of the law, Souter said the abortion providers would have to show 1) a likelihood that irreparable injury would result from implementation of the act, 2) a reasonable probability the high court would accept their challenge for full review, and 3) a fair prospect that they would win on the merits.

Souter acknowledged the law's opponents could meet the first test by proving that the restrictions would pose a "substantial obstacle" to women seeking to exercise reproductive rights but said they could not satisfy the other two requirements.

In light of the high court's 1992 ruling upholding most of Pennsylvania's abortion restrictions, Souter said there is no reasonable prospect that the court would accept the case and no fair prospect that

opponents of the law would prevail if it did.

-30-

-- By Larry Chesser

Wife of New York staffer  
killed by drunk driver

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (ABP) -- Theresa Losito, wife of staff member David Losito of the Baptist Convention of New York, died from injuries sustained in a car accident Jan. 23 -- the third staff spouse to die in the past year.

The Lositos and their five children were returning from a family wedding in Virginia when they were struck nearly head-on by another car. The driver of the other car, who was critically injured, was drunk at the time, police said.

None of the other members of the Losito family were seriously hurt. The children range in age from six months to 8 years. Theresa Losito was 34.

David Losito is accountant and business manager for the state convention. The Lositos were active members of a Catholic church in Liverpool, N.Y.

"Three times in the past 12 issues of the New York Baptist, the front page has carried the news of the death of a staff spouse," wrote the newspaper's editor, Quentin Lockwood, whose own wife, Pat, died of cancer in 1993. The 12-person convention staff also suffered the loss of June Day, wife of Clayton Day, associate executive director.

"Three gentle and loving women are gone and we are left confused and broken," Lockwood wrote. "... We stand weeping and know that Christ stands weeping beside us."

-30-

\*\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*\*