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Editor: Greg Warner

Phone: (904) 262-6626

Fax: (904) 262-7745  
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Executive Committee targets  
Annuity Board, CBF for study

By Bob Allen

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

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention defended itself against charges that it is soft on abortion and is expanding into investment services beyond its SBC-approved assignment in meetings of the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 21-22 in Nashville, Tenn.

Toward the end of the two-day meeting, a statement was read to Executive Committee members to assure them the Dallas-based agency does not invest Southern Baptist funds in companies that provide services or products that aid, support or promote abortion.

After hearing the statement, written by Annuity Board President Paul Powell, Executive Committee members agreed to abandon their attempt to restrict the Annuity Board's use of SBC funds until the agency toughened its abortion stand.

But a second dispute involving the Annuity Board could not be smoothed over as quickly.

A group representing the Southern Baptist Foundation and foundations in Baptist state conventions asked the Executive Committee to prohibit the Annuity Board from offering investment services to Baptist agencies beyond the narrowly-defined retirement and insurance services spelled out in the agency's program description.

The foundations allege the Annuity Board is moving into competition with their agencies, which exist to invest and manage funds for Southern Baptist organizations.

In a subcommittee meeting, Annuity Board representatives said they are responding to requests for investments with the higher yields the board can negotiate backed by its \$3.9 billion in assets.

Annuity Board representatives said they will abide by an interpretation by the Executive Committee that they should cease to expand their client base for investment services until a special committee studying program statements completes its work.

The Executive Committee also specifically requested that the Annuity

Board not further expand its services to agencies not sanctioned by the SBC. Currently the Annuity Board administers retirement programs for Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Criswell College and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Mid-America and Criswell are independent schools supported mainly by conservative Southern Baptists. The Fellowship is an alternative missions agency formed by moderates in reaction to a rise to power by fundamental-conservatives in the SBC.

The Fellowship also attracted other Executive Committee attention. A motion was passed to "study the impact" of money coming through the Fellowship to SBC entities. Officers and staff will recommend to the committee's Business and Finance Subcommittee on Monday, June 13, whether those funds should be accepted or rejected, the motion said.

In other business, the Executive Committee adopted a \$136,539,730 Cooperative Program budget to be recommended to messengers at the 1994 SBC annual meeting, scheduled June 14-16 in Orlando, Fla. The budget, which is based on actual receipts in 1993, is overall 1.23 percent lower than the 1993-94 SBC budget.

Cooperative Program giving through the first four months of the current fiscal year is 1.8 percent ahead of last year, reported Morris Chapman, Executive Committee president. Consecutive monthly gains over previous year totals were reported in October, November and December, Chapman said, before a .27 percent drop in January.

An audit of Executive Committee finances revealed deficit spending in 1992-93 of \$99,001.

An attempt to change the location of the 1999 SBC meeting from Atlanta to Denver, Colo., was deferred by the Executive Committee until signed contracts for the 1995 convention, also scheduled in Atlanta, can be secured.

The effort to move the convention was prompted by action by Atlanta city officials to protest passage of anti-homosexual legislation by Colorado. The Colorado law has since been declared unconstitutional, decreasing sentiment on the Executive Committee for retaliation.

The high cost of staging a convention in Atlanta, however, makes it likely the convention will seek to pull out of Atlanta in 1999 anyway.

The Executive Committee designated St. Louis, Mo., the site for the SBC annual meeting in 2002. The committee also authorized evaluation of policies on rotation of convention cities, which were imposed when conventions drew as many as 45,519 messengers. Registration at the last two conventions was under 18,000, leading officials to believe smaller cities could once again handle the meeting.

The committee also viewed a pilot for a television program called "News Matrix" produced by the Executive Committee's convention relations office.

Cost for the pilot, modeled after the pace of CNN's "Headline News" and the syndicated "Entertainment Tonight" was reported at about \$20,000. Despite cost projections of over \$1 million annually, the Executive Committee called for a prospectus for production and funding of the program.

The Executive Committee also adopted resolutions honoring Rudy Fagan, who retires Sept. 30 after 20 years as president of the SBC Stewardship Commission, and J. B. Fowler, who recently retired after 12 years as editor of the Baptist New Mexican.

A 3 percent cost-of-living raise was authorized for Executive Committee staff beginning Oct. 1, 1994.

Also, the Executive Committee approved goals of \$100 million for the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions and \$50 million for the Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions in 1995. The goals commemorate the SBC's 150th anniversary, to be observed that year. In 1993, Lottie Moon receipts

totaled \$79.7 million and the Annie Armstrong offering contributed \$35.9 million to home missions.

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Annuity Board faces double  
threat from Executive Committee

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The Annuity Board faced a double-barreled confrontation with the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee Feb. 21-22 but negotiated a last-minute cease-fire on one conflict.

The other conflict -- which also pits the Annuity Board against the Southern Baptist Foundation and state Baptist foundations -- has not been resolved.

The first conflict relates to the Annuity Board's investment in companies perceived to be supportive of abortion. The second conflict relates to the Annuity Board's operation within its SBC-approved assignment.

All the concerns were aired in meetings of the Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee in Nashville, Tenn. During that meeting, the subcommittee was charged with developing a 1994-95 budget for distribution of the Cooperative Program, the SBC's unified budget.

The abortion debate first surfaced in this context, during the time when agency executives make their appeals to the subcommittee for budget funds. The Annuity Board, with an annual budget of \$26 million, receives \$1.06 million in the current SBC budget, used primarily for relief to underfunded pensioners.

In recent years, a small portion of this CP allotment has been used for educational and promotional work. However, the Annuity Board already had announced that 100 percent of the allocation would be given to relief beginning in 1995.

During Annuity Board President Paul Powell's initial presentation to the subcommittee, several members questioned him about the board's investment policy related to abortion.

Because press representatives are allowed in the subcommittee meetings on "background rules" only, no direct quotations or attributions of comments may be reported. However, Powell granted permission for some of his later comments to the subcommittee to be quoted.

The Annuity Board has a policy against investing in any companies producing liquor, tobacco or pornography. But tracking down companies who contribute either directly or indirectly to Planned Parenthood, for example, is difficult, he said.

From an investment standpoint, Powell said, "there is no abortion industry." Thus, divesting from abortion-related stocks cannot be done, he said.

"What you're asking is illogical and unreasonable and simply cannot be done," Powell said.

Further, Powell argued, not all participants in the Annuity Board's plans oppose abortion. Therefore, an improper screening of investments could expose the Annuity Board to lawsuits from some clients who would charge that social-policy screening had resulted in a lowered return on their investments. Similar lawsuits have been filed against other annuity companies, he said.

Subcommittee members were unconvinced by Powell's arguments, which he

made during two days of subcommittee meetings. Frustrated subcommittee members insisted surely something more could be done to make a stronger statement against abortion.

A variety of punitive actions against the Annuity Board were discussed, ranging from completely defunding the board, to asking a different agency to administer relief funds.

Ultimately, the subcommittee proposed giving the Annuity Board the funds but with a notation that they were to be used exclusively for annuitant relief "until such time as the Annuity Board approves a position on abortion-related activities that is consistent with that of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Debate on this issue was intense throughout several sessions. At one point, a subcommittee member revealed a chart showing the salaries of top Annuity Board administrators. Some members suggested there is a stark contrast between those salaries and the appeal for CP funds to assist struggling annuitants.

According to the chart, which apparently had been given to Annuity Board trustees last October, eight of the Annuity Board's top administrators draw base salaries ranging from \$100,000 to nearly \$200,000. The average salary of the board's 12 top administrators is \$122,312.

Also during the debate, a committee member suggested the only way to get the Annuity Board's attention would be to gain control of its trustee board the same way conservatives gained control of the Executive Committee and other SBC trustee boards in recent years. This member said the Annuity Board previously had been left alone because it was not a center of power.

At the final meeting of the program and budget subcommittee, Powell introduced William Willis, an Arkansas layman who serves as chairman of Annuity Board trustees.

Willis engaged the subcommittee members in a lively debate, which cannot be reported because of subcommittee restrictions. He specifically decried the release of salary information, which he said Annuity Board trustees had voted to keep confidential.

Further, Willis expressed his disappointment that the Executive Committee would attempt to dictate policy to another SBC body and make the agency appear to favor abortion.

Subcommittee members sat in silence during Willis' fiery speech. Afterward, several downplayed the subcommittee's earlier pronouncements. Several expounded on their opposition to divulging any salary information, and one offered an apology to the Annuity Board for what had happened.

But even so, the recommendation to chastise the Annuity Board on the abortion issue was passed and sent on to the full Executive Committee.

Between that afternoon meeting and the evening session of the full Executive Committee, Powell met with Executive Committee leaders.

Later, when subcommittee chairman Guy Sanders stood to present the subcommittee's report to the full committee, he read a statement from Powell:

"The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has long held a position of opposition to the wanton destruction of life inherent in the practice of abortions. Several years ago the trustees approved a staff recommendation to deny medical plan benefits for abortion. In our investment decisions we will avoid, or divest in orderly fashion, equities in any company that is found to have a service or product that is publicly perceived as uniquely aiding, supporting or promoting abortion. This commitment grows out of a deep personal, biblical-based conviction that is shared by the president, the trustees and the officers of the Annuity Board."

Sanders then called for a motion to delete from the budget recommendation the censure of the Annuity Board. That motion was made and

carried unanimously.

That appeared to defuse the dispute. But two days later, the Annuity Board charged Powell's statement had been misconstrued in a report by Baptist Press, the Executive Committee's news service.

In a Feb. 23 report, BP editors Herb Hollinger and Art Toalston said the Annuity Board had agreed not to invest "in corporations which actively contribute to organizations involved in abortions, such as Planned Parenthood."

Thomas Miller, Annuity Board vice president for public relations, immediately faxed a clarification to Baptist editors, accusing Baptist Press of a "gross error."

Miller said Powell's statement did not refer to charitable contributions. "I don't know how the statement could possibly have been interpreted in this way," he said.

"The Annuity Board cannot police the charitable contributions of corporations," Miller said. "Dr. Powell's statement related only to equity investments. The stock purchase decision would rest upon finding the 'service or product' of the company being 'publicly perceived' as 'uniquely aiding, supporting or promoting abortion.'"

"A contribution by a corporation ... to a charitable organization is neither a product nor a service of that corporation."

In the 1994-95 Cooperative Program budget, the Annuity Board will receive \$1.05 million. Like all other SBC agencies, its allocation was reduced 1.23 percent.

Intertwined amid the abortion debate, the same subcommittee also challenged the Annuity Board about working within its program statement.

Program statements are the guidelines given to all SBC agencies, institutions and commissions to outline the boundaries within which they have authority to operate. In this case, the Southern Baptist Foundation and state Baptist foundations have charged the Annuity Board is encroaching upon their territory by offering endowment management services.

Further, the Executive Committee expressed concern about the Annuity Board providing annuity investment services to three non-SBC entities.

The Annuity Board's assignment is expressed in three areas: management of retiree annuities, administering a program of ministers' relief and offering insurance plans and related services.

The subcommittee raised two points of contention. The first charge was that by offering investment management services to some Baptist agencies and schools, the Annuity Board was encroaching upon the assignment given the foundations.

The second was that the Annuity Board had stepped beyond its assignment by managing annuities for employees of Criswell College, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Criswell and Mid-America are independent schools closely affiliated with Southern Baptist churches. The Fellowship is a group of Southern Baptist moderates displeased with the SBC's new conservative leadership.

Several directors of state Baptist foundations were present at the meeting, and two specifically testified against the Annuity Board. One said he believes the Annuity Board has been aggressively soliciting schools in his state and therefore working against the state foundation.

The Annuity Board countered that while it may have accidentally strayed from its program assignment, it did not intend to harm any other Baptist group. Rather, the intent was to help Baptist entities achieve the best possible return on their investments.

The gist of the Annuity Board's defense is that because it manages about \$3.9 billion in annuity investments already, it has the leverage to obtain

better returns on other investments as well. One example given was that an unnamed SBC board could earn up to \$4 million more on its money next year if placed under Annuity Board management instead of its current management.

The Annuity Board contends it would not be drawing business away from the Baptist foundations but from secular investment companies.

On the other hand, the foundation executives contend the Annuity Board should be held strictly to its program statement for the sake of preventing confusion. Further, they argue allowing the Annuity Board to enter management of agency and board endowments would encroach upon their own business. And, they added, some Baptist foundations can match the Annuity Board's performance.

Annuity Board representatives have said they plan to return to the September Executive Committee meeting with a proposed change in their program statement that would allow them to offer these services. For the time being, however, the board has agreed to "discontinue expanding" such services.

Upon the subcommittee's recommendation, the full Executive Committee passed a motion requesting this of the Annuity Board. Further, the committee asked the board to stop expanding its management of annuity services beyond specifically sanctioned SBC churches, agencies, associations and state conventions.

An Annuity Board spokesman said this means the agency will not discontinue its accounts with Criswell College, Mid-America Seminary and the Fellowship. However, adding any more such accounts would be prohibited for now.

Powell indicated the Annuity Board would abide by both requests.

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-- Bob Terry of the Missouri Word & Way contributed to this story.

Executive Committee members  
part of state strategy group

By Greg Warner

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Some members of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, which directs much of the work of the national denomination, are also heavily involved in the political battle for control of the 36 Baptist state conventions.

State-level strategists held another closed-door meeting Feb. 23, but this time the group included at least nine members of the Executive Committee and its chairman, Fred Wolfe, who is also a candidate for SBC president.

The state strategists have met at least four times during the last 18 months in their continuing effort to extend fundamental-conservative control to the states.

Members of the powerful Executive Committee have participated in all four meetings, but this time the gathering was held in the shadow of the Executive Committee building one day after the committee's winter meeting. The invitation-only crowd included all three of the elected officers of the committee.

Executive Committee chairman Fred Wolfe, who announced Feb. 8 he will be a candidate for SBC president this summer, attended. So did vice chairman Eldridge Miller, a pastor from Sallisaw, Okla.

T. C. Pinckney, the committee's secretary, organized the meeting and the

three earlier ones, although he said he did not issue the invitations this time.

Pinckney, a retired Air Force general from Alexandria, Va., said the meeting was a loosely structured, informal gathering of Baptists who are active in their state conventions. In the past he said the group is not seeking to draft a national strategy for gaining control of the state conventions but merely to "exchange experiences."

Organizers refused to open the meeting to reporters. Napkins were taped over the windows of the room at the Clubhouse Inn, a Nashville hotel adjacent to the Executive Committee building.

The same group of Baptist leaders asked Wolfe to seek the presidency, the candidate said in making his bid public Feb. 8.

It is not known, however, if Wolfe's candidacy was discussed at the Nashville meeting. But it was discussed during the two-day Executive Committee meeting that preceded it.

Morris Chapman, committee president and former SBC president, asked the group to pray for Wolfe, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala. He urged members of the committee to "commit ourselves in prayer to Brother Fred" and others who might be nominated.

Conservatives, who usually have united behind a consensus candidate for president, are divided this year over who will carry their banner for the post, which has been key to the conservative rise to power in the SBC.

Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla. -- the city that will host the June SBC meeting -- said Feb. 7 he too is considering the position.

That prompted Executive Committee member J. C. Mitchell, also from the Orlando area, to ask for equal time the next day.

"I just feel in the spirit of fairness, and aware of what Morris Chapman said last night, we should pray for Jim Henry," Mitchell told the committee as it wrapped up its meeting with prayer. "This is not an endorsement. But Jim Henry is in the throes of a decision."

Wolfe, presiding at the committee meeting, said he already is praying for Henry. "I am not praying that he will not run. I am praying God will lead him."

Both Wolfe and Henry have been leaders of the SBC fundamental-conservative movement. Wolfe has taken a high-profile role in the politicking and has collected endorsements from several recent SBC presidents. Henry, meanwhile, has kept some distance from the political fray and is expected to attract support from Baptists disenchanted with denominational politics.

Moderate Baptists are not expected to field a candidate this year.

The Feb. 23 meeting was the second the state strategists have held in Nashville. The other was last February at Two Rivers Baptist Church, again on the heels of the winter Executive Committee meeting.

The group's first was held at Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., in August 1992. The other was in Louisville, Ky., last October, immediately after the inauguration of Albert Mohler as president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Mohler's election was viewed as a victory for fundamental-conservatives.

Executive Committee members attending the most recent meeting include: John Click of Wichita, Kan.; Reuel May of Jackson, Miss.; Gibbie McMillan of Baton Rouge, La.; Miller; William Parker of Lake Mary, Fla.; Pinckney; Guy Sanders of Lake Wales, Fla.; Jim Wells of Lee's Summit, Mo.; and Wolfe.

Others attending included Ken Barnett, a former Executive Committee member from Lakewood, Colo.; LaVerne Butler, president of Mid-Continent Baptist Bible College in Mayfield, Ky.; and Jim Richards, a pastor from Baton Rouge and trustee of the SBC Christian Life Commission.

Several of the 40 state Baptist conventions already are under control of fundamental-conservatives but others have rejected their political overtures. Fundamental-conservatives have held sway at the Executive Committee for a decade and have controlled the SBC presidential election since 1979.

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-- Bob Terry of the Word & Way of Missouri contributed to this story.

Young 'laterals' findings  
of SBC study committees

By Bob Allen

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Task forces announced 17 months ago have completed their critique of the various program areas of the Southern Baptist Convention, Ed Young told members of the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 22.

"Now I'm lateralizing this to the Executive Committee," said Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, who completes his service as SBC president this June.

Young, an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee, arrived near the end of the group's recent two-day meeting in Nashville. The meeting was scheduled to extend until the morning of Feb. 23, but the committee managed to complete its business in sessions Feb. 21-22.

Young rattled off what he called "thumbnail" reports of the nine task forces he appointed to study denominational programs and suggest new areas of Southern Baptist ministry for the next century. His remarks, he said, were "thoughts" and "not recommendations."

"You look at them and decide what you will do with them," he told the 80-member committee, which recommends action to the SBC and functions on the convention's behalf between annual sessions.

The task forces, chaired by Sunday School Board President Jimmy Draper, "produced reams of material seeking where God would have us be in the 21st century," Young said.

Areas touched on in Young's remarks included:

-- Relationships with other Baptists. Young's "cords and stakes" task force was given a two-fold assignment in 1992: to approach "like-minded" churches about support of Southern Baptist evangelism efforts and to study implementation of recommendations in the 1987 SBC Peace Committee report.

Young reported the group suggested publishing an informational piece to describe how a church can affiliate with the SBC. Earlier in the meeting, the Executive Committee's convention relations workgroup distributed a draft copy of such a document.

The task force also asked Southern Baptists to consider becoming an international convention, Young said, possibly by changing the SBC's relationship with Baptist conventions in Canada and Mexico. "Years ago when we decided not to invade Canada with a missionary challenge, I personally think we missed a great, great opportunity," Young said.

Young also suggested that plans be developed to seek independent churches of like mind and theology and invite them to join the SBC. "There are literally thousands of independent churches that are more Baptist than a lot of us in this room," Young said. "Many of them are looking for a way to invest in a worldwide ministry."

"The day of bitterness is generally over" between Southern Baptists and

independent fundamentalists, Young said. "They like who we are. They like where we're going and they're ready to come home to a Bible-believing denomination."

-- Theology. The theological education study group drew from the "Baptist Faith and Message," the 1987 report of the SBC Peace Committee and the 1978 and 1982 Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy, Young said.

"We need to always be rethinking and restating where we are theologically," Young said. He added the convention should "reaffirm regularly" in annual meetings the 1963 "Baptist Faith and Message" statement.

"If we as Southern Baptists were alert when the Bultmannian wave came from Germany ... and we had recognized what this was about, in lessening the high view of God's word, ... perhaps we never would have gotten into the situation we found ourselves in a few years back as far as theological education is concerned," Young said.

-- Urban missions. "There's one area I'm really not satisfied with," Young said. "We need to get a very clear, dynamic, prayed-through, direct, thorough strategy to reach our cities, not just the inner city -- certainly the inner city -- but the whole city."

"We are still basically a bucolic denomination," he said. "We are going to have to change that if we are going to be reaching people for Jesus Christ in the 21st century."

Some in Young's audience disagreed with his conclusions. Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis confronted Young after the session.

Asked to respond to Young on the record, Lewis told Associated Baptist Press, "I certainly agree with his concern for the cities." However he said Young "may not be aware we do have a long-established strategy" for reaching cities -- the HMB's Mega-Focus Cities process which involves population centers of 1 million or more in goal-setting for church planting, evangelism and cooperation across agency lines.

-- The denominational press. Young urged Southern Baptists to "work to change the negative, critical slant" of the denominational press.

Young singled out the practice of investigative reporting, which he said is inappropriate in Christian publications. "I should not seek to uncover anything about your life and publicize it in a negative way," he said.

"There are too many great things happening in the kingdom of God for us to give attention to 15 people over here and 25 people over here or 75 people over there when thousands of people are coming to Christ every Sunday," Young said.

Jack Brymer, editor of the Florida Baptist Witness and past president of the Southern Baptist Press Association, said Young's comments on both the Baptist press and other areas of work "reflect gross ignorance" of denominational life.

"Probably 90 percent of the information in Baptist state papers is positive," Brymer said. "The overwhelming majority of space is given to reporting on missions. Apparently he does not read Baptist state papers. Otherwise he could not make such a statement."

Young also suggested that attention be given to involving ethnic church leaders in decision-making, emphasizing centralized fund-raising rather than the multiple pleas for contributions now facing churches, re-examining the division of Cooperative Program funds between state and national entities, women's ministries and youth evangelism.

"We are baptizing half of the children and kids that we were in the '70s," he said.

Public schools should teach about religion, Walker says

By Pam Parry

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. (ABP) -- Failure to teach about religion in public schools is as wrong as advancing religion in them, a Baptist church-state specialist said recently.

"Religion should be taught within its appropriate historical, cultural and pedagogical context," said Brent Walker, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee in Washington, D.C.

Speaking at a high school forum in Williamsport, Pa., on equal access for religious views in public schools, Walker said courses in art, music, literature and history "will offer natural opportunities to include discussion about religious influences."

Students are generally more free than teachers to express and exercise their religion, Walker said. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that teachers, as government representatives, cannot engage in religious indoctrination, proselytize or lead devotionals.

But, he said, they can teach about religion. Permissible teaching about religion includes:

- an academic, not devotional, approach to religion;
- an aim of enhancing awareness of religion without pressing for acceptance;
- a study that does not involve the practice of religion;
- exposure to diversity of views without promotion, denigration or imposition of a particular one; and
- information about beliefs that does not seek conformity.

The Williamsport School District was "right in the thick of the pre-legislation judicial fights" to establish equal access for religious clubs, Walker said. Williamsport received national attention when a student asked the high court to rule that the Constitution requires equal access. The court disposed of *Bender vs. Williamsport* on procedural grounds rather than ruling on the merits of the student's argument.

The Baptist Joint Committee, along with others, led the fight for the 1984 Equal Access Act that allows for Bible clubs or religious groups to have the same access to meet on campus before and after school as other non-curriculum groups.

If a school district allows the "Young Republicans" to meet, it must also allow the "Young Baptists" to meet, Walker said.

However, if the school district forbids non-curriculum related clubs, then equal access is not triggered, he added.

School personnel may not sponsor the clubs or direct them, but they may attend in a non-participatory capacity, he said.

Unlike students in the classroom, religious clubs may "engage in overtly sectarian activities such as prayer, Bible study and hymn singing," Walker said.

"Students are generally free to exercise their religion according to the dictates of their conscience even while at school," he said.

Schools cannot prohibit students from bringing their Bibles or other religious literature to school, Walker said. Students may read those materials during study hall or other periods of free time. They also may share their faith in a non-disruptive manner, he said.

Teachers do not "shed their constitutional right to freedom of speech," but as state representatives they have limitations on their free-exercise rights, he said.

Walker said teachers frequently are asked if they can discuss their personal beliefs when teaching about religion.

"The answer is not all that clear," Walker said, adding that some teachers prefer not to risk interjecting personal beliefs into the classroom setting so they do not talk about them. "If you are teaching very young children this may be preferable. Others want to do so particularly if asked."

Offering a suggestion by Charles Haynes of the First Liberty Institute, Walker said teachers that choose to identify their religious belief should add that "these are my personal beliefs but my role here is to present with fairness and sensitivity a variety of beliefs."

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