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Draper says he's not interested  
in Southwestern presidency

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Jimmy Draper, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has no interest in being president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he told employees of the Nashville, Tenn.,-based publishing house April 5.

In a prepared statement read during an employee chapel service, Draper said he has been asked by a group of individuals to present his name to a search committee seeking a successor to Russell Dilday and has received "many calls" about rumors linking his name to the presidency of the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary.

But, he said, he is unwilling to be considered for the position.

"At a time when I am challenging employees of the Baptist Sunday School Board to our greatest days of ministry to churches and individuals, I want to state my firm conviction that God led me here to remain as your president," Draper said. "I believe it is his will for me to remain at this position as we pursue the challenge that he has given to us."

"While I am honored that anyone would consider me worthy to serve Southwestern Seminary, I will not allow my name to be considered for the presidency," Draper said.

Draper said he planned to send a copy of his statement to Miles Seaborn, a Fort Worth pastor who chairs a committee seeking a new president.

Dilday, 63, was fired March 9 by the seminary's board of trustees, who cited irreconcilable philosophical differences stemming from Dilday's criticism of political abuses during a 15-year rise to power by the Southern

Baptist Convention's right wing.

Many observers viewed Draper, a native Texan and Southwestern graduate, as heir-apparent at Southwestern, where he served as trustee chairman. He earned his stripes in the conservative movement, serving as SBC president in 1983-84, yet has been hailed as a peacemaker in the denominational conflict.

Draper, 58, is a third-generation Southwestern graduate. Before assuming leadership at the Sunday School Board in 1991, he was long-time pastor at First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas, a suburb of Fort Worth.

Some observers have suggested that Draper is unhappy at the Sunday School Board helm, given declining literature sales and family pressures brought on by an invalid mother. But he told board employees he is encouraged by recent developments.

"I believe God has formed in our hearts and minds a great vision for the future of this institution," he said. "He is pulling our hearts and lives together as a team and placing a growing spirit of excitement and enthusiasm about the work of this board."

"We have a great opportunity to help move Southern Baptists forward together in these next years," Draper said. "Let us be builders of bridges to link a lost world with the Savior."

As chairman of Southwestern's board of trustees in 1990, Draper's intervention is credited with helping Dilday survive an earlier crisis with trustees.

That conflict arose after Dilday told a reporter at that year's SBC annual meeting that "crass, secular political methodology" with "satanic and evil qualities" had been employed in the "takeover" of the SBC since 1979.

Most of the members of the seminary's board of trustees had been elected during the period described by Dilday, and many felt maligned by the statement. The board gathered for its fall meeting amid rumors that Dilday would be fired or censured or that trustees would embarrass him by rejecting his nomination for theology dean.

With tensions mounting, Draper requested a "retreat" setting, away from student protests that had marked previous meetings, for his first session as board chairman. Trustees and Dilday emerged from a relaxed, two-day meeting at an area hotel with a commitment to forget the past, build trust and transcend a climate of conflict.

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-- By Bob Allen

Americans more religious,  
society less, survey says

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- While most Americans see themselves becoming more religious, they see their country as becoming less so, according to a new study by U.S. News and World Report.

Almost two thirds (62 percent) of the Americans surveyed by the newsmagazine say religion has a growing influence on their lives. But even more (65 percent) say religion is losing its influence on American life.

The study, published in the magazine's April 4 issue, found ample evidence of faith among the masses:

-- 76 percent of Americans say God is a personal being who hears prayer. To others, God is an impersonal creator (8 percent) or idea (11 percent).

-- 80 percent say the Bible is the word of God. While 34 percent say it should be taken literally, 46 percent say it is inspired but not all

literally true.

-- 68 percent belong to a church or synagogue, and 30 percent say they attend services every week. There is one church for every 900 Americans, more than in any other country, the magazine reported.

-- 46 percent describe themselves as "born again."

While those numbers suggest Americans are as religious as ever, the magazine said, most Americans see their culture as less influenced by religion or even hostile toward their moral or spiritual values.

For some this is experienced as open hostility from society in general, an opinion voiced by 30 percent of Americans surveyed. But even more Americans detect hostility from specific social institutions -- television, 62 percent; newspapers, 46 percent; Congress, 47 percent; President Clinton, 34 percent.

While Americans apparently would like society's moral commitment to more resemble their own, they don't want to limit individual freedom or invoke the power of government to accomplish that, the survey found.

Six out of seven Americans (84 percent) say government policies should reflect moral values, and 55 percent say God is the moral guiding force in American democracy. Yet 91 percent say individual freedom is an essential element of democracy, and 53 percent say church and state should be kept separate.

That creates something of a dilemma for Americans, U.S. News concluded. "As a people, we are uneasy with the perpetual tension between our religious impulses and our unwavering commitment to a secular society," the magazine said.

While Americans may be as outwardly religious as their forebears, the magazine said, the content of their faith is changing. They are more eclectic in their faith, more tolerant of other beliefs, and less devoted to the dividing lines of denominations and dogma.

The survey found that 70 percent of Americans believe "each individual must determine what is right or wrong." And 48 percent say "there is no one set of values that is right."

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-- By Greg Warner

Catholic, evangelical leaders  
sign historic agreement

By Mark Wingfield

NEW YORK (ABP) -- In a move described by some as symbolic of America's changing religious alignments, two Southern Baptist leaders joined 38 representatives of Catholic and evangelical groups in signing an unprecedented pledge of cooperation March 29.

"I feel like evangelicals have a lot more in common today with conservative Catholics than we do with liberal Protestants who deny the cardinal doctrines of our faith," explained Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, one of the signers.

"Some of us feel like we're fighting for our life to keep Judeo-Christian values intact in America today," Lewis added. "It's going to take all the strength we can muster to fight against this onslaught of secular humanism."

Lewis was joined by Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, among initial signers of the

25-page document titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together."

The four key instigators of the statement were Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship, Avery Dulles of Fordham University, Kent Hill of Eastern Nazarene College and Richard John Neuhaus of the Institute on Religion and Public Life.

"As evangelicals and Catholics, we pray that our unity in the love of Christ will become ever more evident as a sign to the world of God's reconciling power," the statement declares. "Our communal and ecclesial separations are deep and long-standing.

"We do not deny, but clearly assert, that there are disagreements between us," it continues. "Misunderstandings, misrepresentations and caricatures of one another, however, are not disagreements. These distortions must be cleared away if we are to search through our honest differences in a manner consistent with what we affirm and hope together on the basis of God's word."

The statement carries no official sanction from the Southern Baptist Convention or any religious body, but is identified as the opinion only of the signers.

However, the statement notes the discovery of "common convictions about Christian faith and mission" between evangelicals and Catholics. Some of the areas of agreement cited include:

- Jesus Christ is Lord.
- Justification by grace through faith because of Christ.
- The authority of the "divinely inspired" and "infallible" Bible.
- A hope that all people will come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The document hones in on the social issues both conservative Protestants and conservative Catholics have been fighting for in what has been called America's "cultural war." The signers declare their united opposition to abortion and pornography, their desire for "parental choice" in education and their belief that Christian perspectives often are trampled by too-strict interpretations of the First Amendment.

The statement asserts that "politics, law and culture must be secured by moral truth."

Declaration of such a common agreement isn't surprising to sociologist Nancy Ammerman, a Southern Baptist who teaches at Emory University in Atlanta.

"What we have seen over the last decade and a half has been the realization that conservatives across the religious spectrum have a lot of things in common," she said. "They probably discovered they have a lot of things in common by engaging in political combat.

"The most common thing conservatives share across the board is a feeling that the larger culture has become too secular and that it's important for people of faith to band together in the face of a secular culture," she added.

Nor was the document surprising to James Chancellor, associate professor of Christian missions and world religions at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Chancellor has been studying the emerging alliance between evangelicals and conservative Catholics.

Agreement between evangelicals and Catholics on such a document would have been unthinkable in the 1950s and 1960s, he said. But social changes in America in the 1970s brought a new climate.

"What happened pretty clearly to me is that evangelical Christianity as a whole drew a line in the sand between the broader culture and themselves over this issue of abortion. When they looked down the line, they saw the Catholics on the same side of that line."

At the same time, evangelical Protestants adopted an "essentially Catholic stance with regard to life and conception," Chancellor noted. "I have not been able to find any evangelical theologians or prominent preachers who held the position that life began at conception prior to 1970. There has been a rather remarkable shift in theology."

Differences between Catholics and evangelicals were compounded in the 19th century and early 20th century because the two groups found themselves with opposing views on the social issues of that day, he explained. Those issues included Sunday Sabbath and alcohol.

"But now the social issues are homosexuality and abortion, basically what you call 'family values.' And now the Catholics and evangelical Protestants are on the same side. In defensiveness against the society at large, they are finding unity."

While the signers have found agreement on these social issues, they admit differences still exist on some doctrinal issues. The document cites differences on issues such as:

- Whether the church is a visible communion or invisible fellowship of true believers.

- Whether Scripture is authoritative on its own or only as interpreted by the church.

- Whether Christians have soul freedom or must submit to the teaching authority of the church.

- Whether the sacraments and ordinances of the church are merely symbols of grace or a means of grace.

- The role of baptism.

- The importance of devotion to Mary.

Yet the statement calls for an end to "proselytizing" members from each other's folds while affirming the need of all people to be converted to Christianity.

"In view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community," the statement says.

That is a landmark statement, according to Chancellor.

"This would have been unimaginable in the 1960s, from either side," he said. "This theological transition is a direct result of a common moral and social agenda over against the secular and anti-religious drives of the broader society."

This once-impossible coalition is evidence of the changing landscape of American religion, according to Bill O'Brien and Bill Leonard of Samford University.

"We've already moved into the era of trans-denominationalism," said O'Brien, director of Samford's Global Center. "Those lines which used to divide us were vertical -- between Protestant and Catholic. Now the axis has shifted to be horizontal. You don't hear people asking if you're Baptist or Catholic, but where you stand on AIDs, abortion, and other issues of special interest.

"People from all religious backgrounds are finding common ground on social issues," O'Brien said.

"This really is an evidence of new alignments, this time over social issues and a broad theological conservatism," added Leonard, a church historian who heads Samford's religion department.

And though Baptists in the past have railed against the ecumenical movement, this new trend is a form of ecumenism, O'Brien said.

"Whether this turns out to be the greatest thing that came along really

is not the issue," he explained. "If you're standing on the outside looking in, it's another indicator of ecumenicity of spirit. That really represents a sea change from where we were 35 or 40 years ago."

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#### Excerpts from "Evangelicals and Catholics Together"

"We together, evangelicals and Catholics, confess our sins against the unity that Christ intends for all his disciples."

"The shameful reality is that, in many places around the world, the scandal of conflict between Christians obscures the scandal of the cross, thus crippling the one mission of the one Christ."

"As evangelicals and Catholics, we dare not by needless and loveless conflict between ourselves give aid and comfort to the enemies of the cause of Christ."

"Jesus Christ is Lord. That is the first and final affirmation that Christians make about all reality."

"All who accept Christ as Lord and Savior are brothers and sisters in Christ. Evangelicals and Catholics are brothers and sisters in Christ. ... He has chosen us, and he has chosen us to be his together."

"We do not presume to suggest that we can resolve the deep and long standing differences between evangelicals and Catholics. Indeed these differences may never be resolved short of the Kingdom Come."

"Religion, which was privileged and foundational in our legal order, has in recent years been penalized and made marginal. We contend together for a renewal of the constituting vision of the place of religion in the American experiment."

"The pattern of convergence and cooperation between evangelicals and Catholics is, in large part, a result of common effort to protect human life, especially the lives of the most vulnerable among us. ... The statement that the unborn child is a human life that -- barring natural misfortune or lethal intervention -- will become what everyone recognizes as a human baby is not a religious assertion. It is a statement of simple biological fact."

"That we are all to be one does not mean that we are all to be identical in our way of following the one Christ."

"In considering the many corruptions of Christian witness, we, evangelicals and Catholics, confess that we have sinned against one another and against God. We most earnestly ask the forgiveness of God and one another and pray for the grace to amend our own lives and that of our communities."

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Catholics will welcome document,  
church's liaison with SBC predicts

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Roman Catholics will receive the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" document largely with appreciation, predicted Frank Ruff, Catholic liaison with Southern Baptists.

The 25-page document outlining areas of agreement between evangelical Christians and Catholics was released March 29 by a coalition of 40 signers, including Southern Baptist officials Larry Lewis and Richard Land.

Ruff noted that Catholics -- like the Southern Baptists -- who signed the document were expressing their own opinions and not any official stance of the church. The signers, while wholly within the Roman Catholic Church, represent a specific mindset within Catholicism, he said.

"I think with minimal exception, sections one, two, three and five will be affirmed on the Catholic side," he said. Those sections deal largely with identifying areas of doctrinal agreement and disagreement and a call for better relations between Catholics and evangelicals.

"When they get to section four, the social issues section, some Catholics will find themselves there. But it will not speak for a lot of Catholics," Ruff said. That section outlines positions on issues such as abortion, pornography, education, economics and church-state relations.

Ruff said he personally was "thrilled" with parts of the document "because this was the first time I can remember reading in evangelical literature the call of John 17:21, 'that all may be one,' and the theology that there is one church because there is one Christ.

"If we can reflect on that together, I think we'll gain some new understandings of who we are."

Ruff said the document complements dialogues between Southern Baptists and Catholics that have been ongoing since 1971. However, these dialogues sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Conference of Catholic Bishops have no direct link to the document.

"I think what it means is that now the two groups, the Catholics and Baptists, in our regular structures need to respond to it," Ruff said. "That's the way I think it will be a sustaining document."

While the document's signers include people assembled with a like mind on social issues, Ruff said he would like to see further dialogue between Catholics and evangelicals with different commonalities.

"I would like to assemble a group of people who have a like mind on the lordship of Jesus and the inspiration of Scripture and the affirmation of the Apostles Creed," he explained.

There is a danger in "separating ourselves out as though the social issues are the key thing," Ruff added. "If the social issues are the key things, then you form coalitions around those social issues you agree on. So you say from the beginning, 'Those are the most important things in my life.'

"I think we should be saying, 'The most important thing in my life is Jesus Christ.'"

Praise, criticism of accord  
coming from unusual quarters

By Mark Wingfield

(ABP) -- A landmark document outlining agreement between prominent evangelical and Catholic leaders has drawn less-than-typical reactions from Southern Baptists.

Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board, and Richard Land, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, are among 40 signers of the document titled "Evangelicals and Catholics Together."

Land and Lewis, who represent the most conservative side of Southern Baptists, drew immediate criticism from some of their conservative brethren and praise from some of their usual critics.

Stan Hastey, executive director of the Alliance of Baptists, a mainly East Coast group of more liberal Southern Baptists, lauded the document for enriching the dialogue between Protestants and Catholics.

"The Alliance of Baptists applauds any effort to bridge gaps between and among groups of Christians," Hastey said. "I personally feel that the increasing signs of ecumenism all along the spectrum of Southern Baptist life are encouraging and helpful. It helps give witness to the essential oneness of Christians."

But Ben Rogers, a vocational evangelist from Longview, Texas, criticized Lewis and Land for not being conservative enough in their theology.

"Are we to accept Catholicism as biblical Christianity rather than the perversion of Christianity that it is?" Rogers asked in a letter to Lewis March 30. "Catholicism is still pro-pope, pro-Mary and pro-sacrament. No renewal movement in Catholicism has ever corrected errors in Catholic doctrine."

Rogers, a doctoral graduate of and former professor at conservative Luther Rice Seminary, noted that signers of the document condemn any "needless and loveless conflicts between ourselves." Then he asked, "Was the Reformation a 'needless and loveless conflict'?"

He specifically criticized a portion of the document that calls on evangelicals and Catholics to stop proselytizing or "sheep stealing" from each other's folds.

The document states: "In view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community."

"It is one thing to unite against hunger, crime and abortion issues, and quite another to become a victim of compromise by worshiping with any apostate group," Rogers wrote in his letter. "Although there are born-again individuals in Catholicism, the theological system is not biblical Christianity."

The joint document will highlight different streams within conservative evangelicalism, predicted a sociologist and professor of world religions.

Nancy Ammerman, a Southern Baptist who teaches sociology of religion at Emory University, said those who are likely to join Rogers in denouncing the document are the "traditional southern Southern Baptists." Those who are likely to applaud it are the "politicized conservatives."

"The people who've been in the trenches on abortion and gay rights are probably not going to be upset by this in the same way as people who are in the traditional Southern Baptist mold," she explained.

James Chancellor, professor of Christian missions and world religions at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said Baptist conservatives are driven by two different agendas, one concerned with social issues and the other concerned with missions and evangelism.

Sometimes the two overlap, but sometimes they do not, he said. "Here's a demonstration of how these two can lead to disparity."

In this case, the pledge of non-proselytizing "demonstrates the dominance of the social agenda over against the evangelism agenda," he suggested.

In response to criticism from fellow conservatives, Lewis and Land drew a distinction between proselytizing and evangelism.

"We do evangelism, not proselytizing," Lewis said in a statement released through Baptist Press. "Understand that Southern Baptist witnessing efforts are not directed at proselytizing anyone, but to bringing people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, which is the responsibility of all Christians."

The idea that Baptists who affirm conservative evangelical theology can find common ground with Catholics is supported by Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary.

"This statement does not indicate that evangelicals and Roman Catholics have shifted where their differences remain on important issues such as the relative authority of Scripture and tradition, the claims of the papacy and other historic theological controversies," he said.

"The restructuring of the American religious landscape has left evangelicals and conservative Roman Catholics perhaps the last two groups who can share an honest disagreement on theological issues," he explained. "These two groups are among the few in American society who affirm the objectivity of truth. This has allowed honest disagreement and the ability to speak honestly about common concerns on the moral front."

There's a danger in making too much of this document by suggesting that evangelicals and Catholics have minimized their theological differences, Mohler said.

But there also is danger in underestimating the importance of this document "by missing the intense sense of common concern and urgency" that has brought evangelicals and Roman Catholics into a coalition despite those differences, he added.

"The most important issue of this document is its attention to basic worldview issues," Mohler declared. "Historians of late 20th century America are certain to indicate the remarkable sense of cultural crisis which has pushed evangelicals and Roman Catholics into unprecedented cooperation."

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Richmond seminary names  
development director

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Texas fund-raiser Gordon Northcutt has been named director of development at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

Northcutt, 28, of Waco, Texas, will begin work with the Virginia seminary May 1.

From 1988 to 1992, he worked with the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee as a development associate and public affairs assistant. Previously, he was a legislative information specialist with the U.S. House of Representatives.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and a master's in economics from Baylor University in Waco.

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-- By Bob Allen

#### Disruption of religious services targeted by civil-rights panel

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is taking aim at widespread disruption of religious services and vandalism of religious property.

The commission, a bipartisan federal agency charged with assessing how federal laws and policies protect equal rights on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap or national origin, voted unanimously April 1 to urge Attorney General Janet Reno to step up enforcement of laws barring acts of religious bigotry.

In a letter to the attorney general, the commission expressed "its deep concern for the continuing and distressing evidence of the disruption by private individuals of religious activities and the vandalism of religious property."

The commission noted that groups across the religious spectrum have been targets. "Such actions of religious bigots should not be tolerated in a nation dedicated to religious freedom," the commission wrote Reno.

The panel, headed by Mary Frances Berry, urged Reno to enhance enforcement of federal laws related to religious intolerance and to "publicly address the issue at a suitable time."

Disruption of religious services and vandalism targeting religious buildings also was addressed by the U.S. Senate last November when that body approved legislation designed to curb escalating violence at abortion clinics.

The Senate approved a bill that would prohibit the use of force or physical obstruction to intentionally injure, intimidate or interfere with a woman seeking an abortion. Before approving the measure, however, senators agreed on a voice vote to accept an amendment sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, that would bar interference with the right of religious freedom at a place of worship and the destruction of religious property.

A similar measure approved by the House of Representatives did not contain the Hatch amendment. Differences between the House and Senate bills are yet to be resolved.

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-- By Larry Chesser

#### President proclaims "Reconciliation Day"

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Marking the 26th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King Jr., President Clinton urged Americans to pursue the slain civil-rights leader's dream by seeking reconciliation.

In declaring April 4 a "National Day of Reconciliation," Clinton called

on Americans "to reflect on the meaning of (King's) teachings, to measure the progress we have made in achieving the dream he shared, and to rededicate ourselves to the end of violence and to the true spirit of community for which he lived and died.

"We must remain a nation that is not too cynical to restore hope, not too frightened to face our problems and not too intolerant to seek reconciliation."

Clinton exhorted Americans to "reflect upon what our divisiveness, our intolerance and our insecurity teach our children."

The president announced the proclamation April 2 during his weekly radio address in which he urged the nation's citizens to "rededicate ourselves to the spirit of Easter, of Passover, of Ramadan; to the mission of Martin Luther King; and to the common values that must make America a land of limitless hope and opportunity for all of our people for all time to come."

In his pre-Easter remarks, Clinton noted that spring is a time for reflection, renewal and rededication.

"At the start of springtime, nature reminds us of new beginnings and forgotten beauty," he said. "And most Americans celebrate holy days of redemption and renewal, from the Christian Easter to the Jewish Passover to the Muslim Ramadan."

For Christians, Clinton said, Easter symbolizes "the ultimate victory of good over evil, hope over despair and life over death."

Clinton, a Southern Baptist, said, "The Bible I carry to church on Sunday says faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen."

"America is a special nation because it is the product of that kind of faith in the future to which many have held fast in spite of fearsome obstacles and great hardships."

Clinton praised King as a "man of faith who stood for and struggled for what is best about America."

King never held public office, Clinton noted, but "no one ever did more to redeem the promise or stir the soul of our nation."

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-- By Larry Chesser

President signs  
education bill

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- President Bill Clinton signed March 31 a major education reform bill that would establish national education standards and provide grants for educational reform.

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (S. 1150, H.R. 1804) has been several years in the making, and nearly was stalled again in Congress because of a controversial school-prayer amendment offered by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C.

The Senate previously approved the Helms' amendment, which would deny federal funds to school districts that prevent participation in constitutionally protected prayer in public schools. But then a House-Senate conference committee substituted a less-stringent initiative offered by Rep. Pat Williams, D-Mont.

The Williams' proposal would bar Goals 2000 funds from being used to prevent voluntary student prayer but would not mandate an across-the-board fund cutoff.

The conference report's alternative sparked controversy in both chambers. But a filibuster attempt by Helms failed to derail the bill.

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-- By Pam Parry

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a three-part series on outcome-based education.

Educators urge balance in debate  
over outcome-based education

By Shari Schubert

(ABP) -- Outcome-based education -- a theory advanced by the federal Goals 2000 package recently signed into law and other education reform -- is the focus of an intense debate among educators, pro-family groups and others.

Advocates claim it will boost achievement in the nation's schools and prepare students to function successfully in the complex world of the future. Opponents deride it as "dumbing down America's schools" and "New Age groupthink" and warn that it will discourage academic effort and promote amoral attitudes.

Educators are encouraging parents and other concerned citizens to study the OBE issue carefully and to seek an informed opinion, rather than simply reacting to something they have read or heard.

"As an educator, I would like to see some balance here," said John Wheeler, chairman of the teacher education department at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo. "OBE is not exclusively right, but it's not totally wrong."

Missouri's Department of Education is in the process of developing up to 75 academic performance standards mandated by the Outstanding Schools Act voted last year by the state legislature.

Nationally, President Clinton recently signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act adopted by Congress which establishes national educational goals and promises seed money for school reforms to be planned and carried out at the state level.

There are people speaking and writing on the topic who really do not know or understand how people learn, Wheeler said, and as a result some are making statements about OBE that they ought not be making.

In principle, outcome-based education is an approach to teaching and learning in which desired learning objectives or "outcomes" are stated, and then educational experiences are designed to help students achieve those outcomes. The principles of OBE are neutral, proponents say. The specific outcomes that are selected will determine the content of the teaching.

One of the major differences between outcome-based education and the more traditional approach is that OBE is not as time-driven. The traditional approach typically is guided by school years, semesters, class periods, courses and units. Students who master the required material in the designated time succeed. Students who learn at a slower pace receive a lower grade, and often are moved on to the next unit or grade level without having mastered the material at hand.

OBE provides for reteaching of material that has not been mastered. "Children are given a second chance," explained Beth Whitaker, principal of

Thorpe Gordon Elementary School in Jefferson City, Mo. If they don't demonstrate the desired knowledge or skill at the end of the learning experience, the material is retaught in a different way.

About 98 percent of the time, she noted, children will improve their grades. That approach, also known as "mastery learning," was implemented at Thorpe Gordon about seven years ago. At the time, the school was showing the lowest performance of any in the district, Whitaker acknowledged. The change in approach resulted in a remarkable improvement, she added, and student achievement now has stabilized at an acceptable level.

Wheeler observed that the "second chance" approach is much more consistent with what students will experience in real-life work experiences, where competence in a job often comes through a process of making and correcting mistakes. In his own job at Southwest Baptist University, he said, "I'm glad I get a second chance."

Some other differences between traditional education and OBE are:

-- Competition between students vs. competition against a standard. With OBE, the "bell curve" disappears. Instead of evaluation based on the premise that a certain percentage of students will fail, educators operate on the premise that nearly all students can succeed. Effort, rather than ability, is seen as the key to achievement.

-- Emphasis on memorization and recall vs. emphasis on demonstrating knowledge in multiple ways. Traditional pencil-and-paper testing tends to favor students who have a good short-term memory. With OBE, students will have an opportunity to demonstrate learning in other ways as well.

Students in an Arizona high school, for example, demonstrated learning in a social studies unit on local government by gathering information and preparing a proposal for renovation of a city park. They succeeded in getting the proposal, which met all local ordinances, approved and implemented by the city council. The way in which OBE is implemented in a particular school can vary greatly. If stated learning outcomes are not significantly different from what is already being taught, OBE could mean little more than a change in teaching methods.

But proponents of OBE envision a more sweeping change -- and that's what has many opponents worried.

A 1992 article by William Spady, director of the Colorado-based High Success Network on Outcome-Based Education, describes what he calls "transformational OBE," in which educators are "stepping outside of the given frameworks ... of traditional schooling and asking fundamental questions about the purpose of the educational system, what it should be preparing students for."

Spady points out that "obviously this opens the door to profound changes in how people view and design curriculum, instructional processes, assessment and evaluation tools, appropriate contexts for learning, and who should be involved in the teaching and learning process."

A frequently heard criticism of outcome-based education is that goals are vague, lacking in substance and virtually impossible to measure. Examples cited include this proposed outcome for Pennsylvania students: "All students understand and appreciate their worth as unique and capable individuals, and exhibit self-esteem." Also cited was a goal for students in Washington state to "communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings."

Another frequently heard concern has to do with the impact of OBE on students who are faster learners. One high-profile critic, author/activist Phyllis Schlafly, described outcome-based education as "a dumbed-down egalitarian scheme that stifles individual potential for excellence and achievement by holding the entire class to the level of learning attainable

by every child. ... If OBE were applied to basketball," she wrote, "the basket would have to be lowered so all could score equally."

Dropping standards to the lowest common denominator so that everyone can reach them is not the intent of OBE, said Baptist layman Richard King, who was coordinator of curriculum services for the Missouri Department of Education until his retirement in 1991. King is a member of First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Mo.

"In the schools I worked with," King pointed out, "we set the standards where the best students are achieving." There is nothing being taught in public schools that cannot be learned by any student who is not severely educationally handicapped, he contends.

Some educators fear that eliminating competition for grades will take away a stimulus for high achievement on the part of students who can excel. But if the desire to earn an A motivates the faster learner, how does grading affect the motivation of the average or slower learner? "Kids quit putting out effort when they learn that they're always going to be at the bottom of the scale," King observed.

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OBE harbors sinister motives,  
according to harshest critics

By Shari Schubert

(ABP) -- Imagine a not-too-distant future in which the United States government -- by then a puppet of a powerful, secretive world political machine -- hands down a list of attitudes, behaviors and values to which each citizen is expected to conform at the end of his or her formal education.

Powerful computers test and track each student's process. Those found to hold "wrong" opinions are subjected to re-education until their views conform to the official "right" answers.

Sound like science fiction? It isn't, according to the sinister scenario painted by the most extreme critics of outcome-based education.

Not all critics would take it that far. Some are simply concerned that state and federal efforts to reform education could undermine religious instruction if outcome-based goals conflict with articles of faith.

Perhaps the most serious questions being raised in the OBE debate have to do with content and control: Who decides what the outcomes should be? Will outcome-based education be used as an excuse to bring into the classroom social and political agendas that conflict with Christian values?

Even supporters of OBE do not deny it could be misused. An educational outcome could be worded to open the door for controversial teaching on homosexuality or some other topic, acknowledged Baptist layman Richard King. "If the community sets that as their outcome, that's what they're going to do," said King, who was coordinator of curriculum services for Missouri's Department of Education until his retirement in 1991.

But whether local school districts will allow such material to filter into their curriculum is a different question. "I know the mores and folkways of this community," said Ron Barton, school superintendent in Webb City, Mo., and a member of First Baptist Church there. When it comes to agendas like homosexuality and condoms, he said, "We have no intention of getting involved in that. ... We've got enough on our agenda teaching kids to read and write, multiply and divide."

But whether a particular outcome should be classified as cognitive

(relating to knowledge) or affective (relating to attitudes and feelings) could be subject to interpretation. The following statements were among student learning outcomes adopted in Pennsylvania, one of the first states to begin using OBE extensively.

In the area of communications: "All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence."

In the area of science and technology: "All students evaluate advantages, disadvantages and ethical implications associated with the impact of science and technology on current and future life."

Author/activist Phyllis Schlafly is one who sees potential problems with outcomes of this sort. "When they talk about 'higher-order thinking skills' or 'critical thinking,' they mean a relativistic process of questioning traditional moral values," she wrote.

Gary Tuma, press secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, offered a different perspective. Teaching students to recognize the need for making ethical decisions is not the same as telling them what decision to make, he said.

King pointed out that when parents or schools provide young people with information and allow them to make choices based on that information, "you run the risk of them not making the decision you want. You can't have it both ways."

While many critics are taking OBE to task for a perceived emphasis on feelings and values rather than factual knowledge, other observers question whether value-neutral education is what the public really wants.

Otis Baker, assistant commissioner in the Missouri Department of Education, said schools have an appropriate role in reinforcing commonly held values such as honesty, respect for authority, fairness and integrity.

But he said a lot of anxiety has been generated by reports of misguided attempts in some parts of the country to introduce material that clashed with mainstream values.

"In every single field, aberrations will happen," he said. But the fact that one minister goes wrong doesn't mean religion is all bad. The same principle should apply in education, he said.

Baker also pointed out that some people will be offended by almost anything. He recalled getting a letter from one parent who was upset over a reading passage that was part of a Missouri Mastery and Achievement Test. The passage told about a girl whose parents gave her a kitten.

"The kitten gave her much joy," the text said. But the writer of the letter held that joy was to be found only in a spiritual experience, not in a kitten.

Most of the controversy over OBE, Baker said, is not about anything that happened, but about fears of what might happen. Despite repeated assurances from state and federal education officials that new standards will not be mandatory and are not intended to strip parents and local school boards of control, some observers are not convinced. Some people think OBE is part of a well-cloaked plot to control the minds of future generations.

A paper on Goals 2000 made available at a recent Real Evangelism Conference sponsored by Atlanta evangelist Bailey Smith warned that a national computer database is being developed that eventually will have a portfolio on every schoolchild.

"Beliefs, attitudes and progress of students, teachers and families are to be monitored and stored in a large federal data base," the paper said. "The computers will select the necessary units of study for the retraining of student attitudes . . . ."

One of the key figures sounding an alarm across the nation is Pennsylvanian Anita Hoge, whose stance on OBE is based largely on results of extensive probing she has done into tests given to public school students.

She cited the Pennsylvania Educational Quality Assessment test, a prototype that consisted of 30 math questions, 30 reading analogies and 375 questions on attitudes and values. One question had to do with whether the student, if invited by his best friend, would join a club that went around defacing public property.

Hoge said she has confronted high-ranking education officials in Washington with her findings, and although they acknowledged that student attitudes are being tested, they have been evasive in answering questions about how they plan to use the data. "We're having a very hard time pinning everyone down," she said.

Tuma, of the Pennsylvania education department, said that the test in question has not been administered since 1988, that the question cited as an example had not been on the test for at least two years prior to the test's discontinuance, that students did not put their names or any other personal identification on the test, and that "it is not related to Pennsylvania's switch to performance-based, or outcome-based, education."

Another OBE opponent is Charlotte Iserbyt of Bath, Maine, a former employee of the U.S. Department of Education. By her own admission, she was fired for divulging a document without authorization.

Iserbyt described the department as "a Marxist factory" and said it has been cooperating with the Russians for years to pattern American education after that of Russia. The objective, she said, is to produce "dumbed-down people for the global work force."

She said OBE is a system of indoctrination, much like dog training, that uses reward and punishment to manipulate student responses. OBE promoters are pushing for schools to put OBE into place with harmless-looking academic outcomes, Iserbyt claimed, because they know that once the system is in place, they can change the outcomes later.

Asked to cite specific incidents where OBE techniques have been used to alter students' values, she replied, "Well, I don't know. ... It's been in for 20 years. ... Everybody knows that. We don't have to prove it anymore."

Opponents also have attempted to link OBE to racism. A January report in the Reading (Pa.) Eagle quoted Pennsylvania gubernatorial candidate Philip Valenti as saying OBE is backed by rich corporate powers who want education for blacks and the lower class to consist of psychological training to be subordinate. "OBE was cooked up by racists who believed non-white people could not be taught higher learning concepts," Valenti was reported as saying.

Missouri Department of Education officials said they are puzzled by the sinister speculations that have become associated with OBE.

"The trappings that it's taken on have become mind-boggling to me," Bartman said. "Everything people don't like about education has been hooked into this principle of organizing instruction."

"Everybody's drawing conclusions, anticipating the worst possible outcome. That's not productive," he said. "Citizens ought not be stamped by this series of anticipated consequences."

Consensus elusive in debate  
over outcome-based education

By Shari Schubert

(ABP) -- It appears unlikely that either Americans in general or Southern Baptists in particular will reach a consensus on outcome-based education any time soon. Parties to the discussion not only can't agree in their opinions; they also can't agree on the facts.

Perhaps one reason for the barrage of conflicting information is that there are many different models of outcome-based education being proposed and/or implemented in different parts of the nation. Some OBE models reflect a radical shift in educational emphases. Some models do not.

"There's so many different versions of this," commented Lamar Cooper, director of denominational relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "You really don't know what's what."

Also, OBE has been tried in different places with different results.

Op-ed columnist Robert Holland, in the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch, reported that costs increased and test results declined under outcome-based education in Rochester, N.Y.

Chicago's experiment with mastery learning in the 1980s also has been cited as a failure. After several years of declining test scores, that project was abandoned.

More recently, a study by R. E. Slavin of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md., showed some success in using OBE with students who had learning difficulties. But it indicated that average and above-average students were not helped, and in fact were held back.

In Pennsylvania's Johnson City School District, where an outcome-driven model was introduced more than 20 years ago, there have been many indicators of success, according to a brochure published by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Students in the Johnson City district have scored above national norms on the California Achievement Test by increasing margins each year since 1977.

The brochure cited OBE programs in several other states that resulted in accelerated academic performance, lower dropout rates, better attendance, fewer discipline problems and more students continuing their education beyond high school.

Along with conflicting and/or inconclusive information, much of what is being written and said about OBE is speculative in nature, and even some of those making the statements acknowledge they don't have ironclad proof:

A November 1993 article in "Focus on the Family Citizen" quoted Jerry Cox of the Arkansas Family Council as saying: "Judging from past performances by education officials, it is our speculation that this is where it's going to go -- requiring students to hold in high esteem all forms of government, all sexual orientations, every way of life. But we don't have evidence of it, and state officials say, 'We wouldn't do that. Trust us.' It's like nailing Jell-O to the wall."

Also complicating the debate is the piggy-backing of other education issues onto OBE. An article titled "What's Wrong With Outcome-Based Education?" in the May 1993 issue of "The Phyllis Schlafly Report" devotes several paragraphs to defending phonics over another method of teaching reading that was used with one OBE program in Oklahoma.

The article decries outcomes in some OBE programs perceived to be "heavily layered with such 'politically correct' notions as training for world citizenship and government (instead of patriotism) . . . ." It declares that "putting computers into the hands of first-graders to give the facade of

moving into modern technology is a gross waste of funds."

But outcome-based education, as a generic set of principles for organizing instruction, does not stipulate any certain method of teaching reading, any particular view of citizenship, or the use of computers in first-grade classrooms.

"OBE can really only be what a local school district wants or permits it to be," said John Wheeler, chairman of the teacher education department at Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo.

Southern Baptist activist Nancy Schaefer, president of Family Concerns in Atlanta, brought "school choice" into the OBE debate in a seminar during the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission's recent annual seminar in Del City, Okla.

Schaefer, a CLC trustee, told conference participants that "families are denied in this federal takeover of American education," with parents "looking into the eyes of a potential totalitarian state headed for a one-world government."

Schaefer submitted a resolution on OBE to last year's SBC annual meeting in Houston. The resolutions committee did not recommend the resolution for a vote but referred it to the CLC as information. While the CLC gave Schaefer a platform to share her concerns at its annual conference, Louis Moore, director of media and products for the agency, said the CLC has not yet officially taken a position on OBE. "We are concerned, obviously," he said.

Cooper, who has been assigned the topic for further exploration by the CLC, said his greatest concern about the philosophy that seems to drive most OBE plans is that it seeks "to create openness in a child to anything." That is a dangerous philosophical point to make with a child who may not be mature enough to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, he said.

"Focus on the Family Citizen" offered the following advice to parents of children in districts that have adopted OBE: "First, meet with your child's teacher. Respectfully discuss what goals he or she has set for your child, and how those goals will be achieved. If the goals address values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, ask for specifics. Mention that you are teaching values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors at home. If classroom instruction conflicts with yours, discuss your concerns. If the teacher is responsive, find ways to cooperate. If the teacher is unresponsive, talk with the school principal. If that fails, go to your school board representative."

Focus on the Family's advice is similar to that offered by Otis Baker, assistant commissioner in the Missouri Department of Education. If parents are concerned about how a particular outcome will be taught, he said, they should talk with teachers and principals, ask to see the curriculum that will be used, and perhaps ask to visit a class when the topic is being taught. Most schools will comply with such requests, he said.

Marjorie Ledell, coordinator of communication and policy for OBE architect Bill Spady's High Success Network on Outcome-Based Education, commented: "Parents have every right to say, 'What are you changing? Why? What will be different? What will be the same?' Educators should anticipate those questions and welcome those questions."