

Associated Baptist Press

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Foreign missionaries to get raises in 1995

By Robert Dilday

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) — Southern Baptist Convention foreign missionaries will get a raise next year, their first since 1991, because of unexpected increases in contributions to the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget.

The larger salaries were part of a 1995 budget adopted by trustees of the convention's Foreign Mission Board during their Oct. 10-12 meeting in Richmond, Va.

SBC Cooperative Program gifts — which fund about 37 percent of the Foreign Mission Board's budget — posted a record \$142,866,782 in 1993-94, more than \$4 million above the SBC program allocation budget.

About \$1.5 million of that windfall went to the FMB, permitting trustees to adopt a budget next year of \$186,245,000 instead of the \$184,620,000 budget originally proposed by budget planners.

The full increase will be channeled into salaries for missionaries. Missionary couples will receive a raise of \$60 per month and single missionaries \$36 a month.

The 1995 budget anticipates a little more than \$68 million from the Cooperative Program and another \$86 million from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. Together the two revenue sources make up almost 84 percent of the board's income. The remainder comes from investments, hunger relief funds and field-generated income.

One channel which has provided revenue was closed earlier this year when the SBC instructed its agencies to refuse funds from the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which was sending about \$1.3 million annually to the Foreign Mission Board.

However, FMB President Jerry Rankin said he believes most Southern Baptist churches which have chosen to fund the FMB through the Fellowship will reroute their gifts to traditional channels of denominational support rather than send their funds elsewhere.

More than 67 percent of the FMB's budget is allocated for missionary support, which includes salaries and benefits. A little more than 12 percent funds home office operations in the United States.

During their meeting, trustees elected David Button, a radio executive from Canton, N. Y., as vice president for public relations and development. Button, 41, a leader among Southern Baptist conservatives, succeeds Alan Compton, who will retire Dec. 31.

Button was elected without opposition. However, trustee Steve Hardy of Burlington, N.C., questioned the nominee's apparent lack of experience in print and television media and in fund raising, areas which he will oversee in his new job.

Rankin said he had been seeking a "good administrator" for the position and that Button will be assisted by Louis Moore, a trained journalist whom Rankin employed this month as associate vice president of communications and director of the news and information office.

Button told trustees he has "general managerial skills ... such that I could marshal the forces and accomplish what you seek to accomplish."

In other action, trustees appointed 39 missionaries Oct. 11, bringing the total missionary force to 4,045.

In his report to trustees, Rankin described the board's efforts at "nationalization" -- the transfer of ownership of institutions established by missionaries to national leaders.

Institutions such as colleges, seminaries and hospitals were "brought into existence with a view to their becoming the responsibility of the local churches (overseas) in the future," Rankin said.

Today, 64 entities are under control of national conventions, 15 have been discontinued and 71 are at some stage of nationalization, he reported. Another 42 will remain under the control of missionaries and 33 will be jointly operated by missionaries and nationals.

"Nationalization is not an effort to bail out or desert our national brethren, but is a process by which they assume responsibility for meeting the needs of their churches ...," said Rankin. "The objective is not to totally phase out any mission involvement, but to identify an appropriate partnership."

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Southern trustees affirm Mohler for seeking professor's resignation

By Mark Wingfield

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have affirmed President Albert Mohler's handling of a controversial personnel matter and his "understanding and application of the Abstract of Principles" in the case.

During their Oct. 11 meeting in Louisville, seminary trustees approved a one-page document titled "Statement on the Resignation of Dr. Molly T. Marshall."

The vote on the issue, taken during an hour-long executive session, was not disclosed. The statement was presented by the board's academic personnel committee, which the day before had reviewed Mohler's actions in the Marshall case and declared him to have acted appropriately.

However, when the committee asked the full board to affirm Mohler, trustee Charles Updike of the District of Columbia asked several questions the trustee chairman determined could be answered only in executive session since they related to a personnel matter. Updike asked what process Mohler had followed in dealing with Marshall and what actions he had taken.

Marshall, an associate professor of theology, announced her resignation from the seminary faculty in August. The announcement came after weeks of negotiations with Mohler, who had threatened to have her fired

for teachings he considered to be outside the Abstract of Principles, the seminary's doctrinal statement.

Mohler has declined to state publicly what charges he intended to bring against Marshall had she not resigned. Critics have accused her of theological liberalism in her views on women's issues and the doctrines of salvation and eternal security of the believer. Marshall claims her views have been misrepresented and that her teaching has been within the Abstract.

The trustee statement affirms Mohler and his administrative staff for their "leadership and actions before during and after" Marshall's resignation. "The entire seminary community should know that the board trusts the judgment of the president in his understanding and application of the Abstract of Principles as it relates to this case."

While affirming Marshall's "giftedness as a teacher" and support among students and faculty, the statement says the president has a higher purpose of "preserving the confessional integrity of our beloved seminary."

In other action, trustees approved a procedure to prevent seminary investments in abortion-related companies, named W.A. Criswell recipient of the E. Y. Mullins Denominational Service Award and amended the seminary charter to require all elected professors to be members of "Southern Baptist" churches.

Criswell recently marked his 50th anniversary as pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas. He has been a prominent figure in the control of Southern Baptist Convention leadership by conservatives since 1979. The Mullins award, named after the seminary's fourth president, is the school's equivalent to an honorary doctorate.

The seminary's current investment policy prohibits investments in companies which have "any substantial and identifiable interest or activity related to gambling, tobacco, beverage alcohol, pornography or abortion."

To strengthen this position, trustees voted to establish a standing committee of the financial board that will meet at least twice a year to review all investments. This committee is instructed to define "substantial and identifiable interest" in tobacco, gambling, alcohol and pornography as anything more than 2 percent of a company's total revenue. This definition does not apply to the abortion issue, which is "understood as zero percent."

The charter change related to faculty members' church membership should have no immediate effect, Mohler said. The charter originally said professors must be members of "regular" Baptist churches.

John Allen, chairman of the trustee executive committee, said the word understood as "regular" in 1859 would best be understood today as "Southern." Mohler said the change was simply to remove "archaic language" from the charter.

When asked what defines a Southern Baptist church, Mohler said the seminary's definition is linked to the Southern Baptist Convention's own definition for seating messengers at annual meetings. That definition requires churches to be "in friendly cooperation with" the SBC and to contribute to SBC causes.

While the change in wording will have no immediate impact on faculty, it theoretically could if the SBC should change its definition of what constitutes a Southern Baptist church.

In his report to trustees, Mohler talked about theological education in turbulent times. He continued to outline his intention to bring the seminary in line with the intentions of its founders.

He called trustees to look for the "neonatal heritage of Southern Seminary" to find the clear intention of the founders both before and during the seminary's beginning.

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Ousted seminary faculty member awarded for 'creative' teaching

By Marv Knox

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) – A faculty member who was asked to resign over controversial teachings at a Southern Baptist seminary has been awarded for "creative approaches to subject matter and service to students" for her work by a non-Baptist consortium of schools.

Molly Marshall, an associate professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., won the Special Merit Award for Instructional Development from Kentuckiana Metroversity, a consortium of schools in Louisville and southern Indiana.

The award -- the competition's top prize -- was presented for Marshall's work in a course on feminist theology and recognizes excellence in teaching and formation of curriculum, said Thomas Diener, Metroversity's executive director.

Marshall's feminist theology course is not expected to be taught at Southern Seminary any time soon, however. This summer, she announced she will leave her post at Southern Dec. 31 rather than face dismissal charges at the initiation of President Albert Mohler.

Mohler declined to comment on the specifics of the charges that would have been brought. However, an administrative memo indicated charges would have centered around two areas -- "failure to relate constructively to" the Southern Baptist Convention and "teachings that might be in conflict with motions or resolutions passed the SBC or support of/involvement with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship," an organization of moderate Southern Baptists.

During 10 years on the seminary faculty, Marshall withstood repeated charges of liberalism and was examined and exonerated by trustee committees.

Marshall said she found some level of vindication from the Metroversity awards' independent panel of judges.

"I want to say how meaningful it is to receive the affirmation of academic colleagues in this area," she said. "Their perception of the needfulness or appropriateness of this course is most reassuring."

Judges all mentioned "how this (feminist theology) course could contribute to positive change in church and in society," she noted.

The course was designed to "sensitize men and women to the oppression of women in the Christian tradition," Marshall said. "It explores several important questions: Why have women been excluded from leadership in the church? Why have women been portrayed as defective, as the inferior sex? Why, to this day, is the role of women in ministry such a controversial issue?"

The course focuses on "neglected passages of Scripture -- passages that relate to, affirm and mention the ministries of women," she added. It studies "the patriarchal language used for God."

The course also examines how to lead churches to be more inclusive and studies "traditional hierarchical theological constructions of the place of men and women in society," she said.

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Jack Brymer to receive first ABP freedom award

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (ABP) -- A Baptist editor who resigned rather than surrender his paper's editorial freedom has been named first recipient of a religious freedom award sponsored by Associated Baptist Press.

The executive committee of ABP's board of directors voted unanimously Sept. 13 to bestow their first Religious Freedom Award on Jack Brymer. Brymer resigned Aug. 26 after 10 years as editor of the Florida Baptist Witness, citing repeated efforts by the paper's board of directors to encourage him to tone down his reporting of controversy and to avoid using news stories from ABP, an independent news service based in Jacksonville, Fla.

Brymer will accept the award at a banquet scheduled Oct. 27 in Nashville, Tenn. The featured speaker at the banquet, sponsored jointly by ABP and the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, will be author Will Campbell, whose books include "The Convention" and "Brother to a Dragonfly."

The award was established by the ABP board in May 1993 to recognize "outstanding contributions in the causes of religious liberty and journalistic freedom," said Greg Warner, ABP's executive editor. Warner cited

Brymer's 27-year career in Baptist journalism and his "courageous actions in recent days" as "supreme examples of the high and holy principles we want to honor."

Brymer said he would accept the award with "deep gratitude but also with a tremendous sense of pride."

"It is gratifying to know ABP has established such an award which should be a source of encouragement to current and future editors in safeguarding freedom of the press," Brymer said.

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— By Bob Allen

'Culture barrier' hinders gospel's growth, speakers say

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) — The biggest barrier to the gospel message is often the messenger, says church-growth specialist and author George Hunter III.

The pious clichés, obscure hymns, spiritual jargon and prescribed behavior often associated with Christians turn off many non-believers, who often feel they are being asked to adopt the behaviors of "church people" when they become Christians, said Hunter.

"Our church subculture has erected dozens of barriers that separate many people from the possibility of becoming disciples," said Hunter, professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, a Methodist school in Wilmore, Ky. "Virtually all these barriers are essentially cultural barriers and have little or nothing to do with the faith once delivered to the saints."

Many non-Christians confuse the message of Christianity with the "distinct subculture" of church people, Hunter said. "They think that you have to dress, talk and act 'that way' and learn to enjoy, say, 18th century German pipe organ music before you can become a Christian."

Hunter, author of "How to Reach Secular People," spoke to an Oct. 10-11 conference on "Church Growth with Biblical Integrity," sponsored by the Baptist Center for Ethics. The meeting, held at Dunwoody Baptist Church in Atlanta, drew 285 registrants from 115 Southern Baptist churches in 19 states.

In his research, Hunter said, three-fourths of unchurched people say the cultural barrier keeps them from considering Christianity. Even half of the unchurched people who eventually become Christians say the culture barrier almost kept them from faith in Christ, he added.

There are other barriers to faith, Hunter noted, including hearts that are "not open to the gospel's appeal." But, he said, "the largest and most widespread barrier that we have any control over that keeps people from faith is the culture barrier."

The early Christian church removed the culture barrier — at least in theory — when the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15, decided not to make Gentiles become Jews in order to embrace Christianity. "But the Christian church has struggled with the problem ever since in many versions," Hunter said.

"Cultural imperialism" — which tried to impose Western culture on Christian converts — characterized much mission work overseas, Hunter said, but it also has infiltrated outreach efforts in America.

The challenge for Christianity today, Hunter said, is to create "culturally relevant churches," translating the message of the gospel into the culture of today, even as Jesus adapted his ministry to the "Galilean peasant culture" of his time. This is done by updating the music, language and style of the church, he said.

Christian history is replete with "culturally relevant" pioneers — like Martin Luther, who abandoned the Latin Bible for Scripture in German vernacular; John and Charles Wesley, who wrote Christian words for tunes borrowed from Britain's public taverns; and William Booth, who formed a Christian band in England and took the gospel to the streets.

"We do not honor our fathers by blindly perpetuating in a changing world what they once did," Hunter

said. "...We honor them by doing for our time and culture what they did for theirs."

"I-feel-culture is a friend of the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Leith Anderson, an author and Baptist pastor from suburban Minneapolis.

Christians are called to combine exegesis with ethnology -- that is, biblical insight with the study of culture -- said Anderson, author of "Dying for Change."

Such a synthesis is the pattern of the New Testament, said Anderson, pastor of Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minn. "That's why we have four gospels," he said. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each adapts the gospel message to a different audience, he said. And the incarnation of Jesus is God's making the gospel flesh.

The Apostle Paul's commitment to "be all things to all men" represents cultural adaptation of the gospel message, Anderson said.

Christians who view culture as the enemy tend to isolate themselves from society, removing the gospel from the marketplace, Anderson said. While modern culture may be "tainted by sin," he said, it is not inherently evil. It is "the pattern of ways in which people relate to one another."

Both Anderson and Hunter offered advice for making churches culturally relevant. Several speakers said it is easier to start a new church geared to culture than to transition an established church.

While spiritual hunger is evident in America, Hunter said, "most traditional churches are no longer able to reach, receive and retain the secular harvest." Most churches grow by attracting Christians from other churches or making converts of those with a church background. The few churches that are reaching "unchurched pre-Christian" converts are those that adapt to the modern world.

Creating culturally relevant churches carries the risk of accommodation, when the gospel is merged so thoroughly with the world that you can't tell them apart, Anderson warned.

That danger is real, Hunter agreed, but so is the danger of not adapting the message to culture. "That too would be to compromise the message." It is better to adapt the message to the culture, even with the risks, than to wait for the culture to change so that it can hear the gospel message in the church's terms.

The two-day conference included small-group workshops on contemporary worship, transitional communities, servant leadership and other topics.

A total of 285 people registered for the meeting, making it the largest conference sponsored by the three-year-old Baptist Center for Ethics. Two thirds of the participants were under 45 years old, said Robert Parham, executive director of the Nashville-based center.

"Baby-boomer and bustle pastors are urgently seeking positive, practical and non-political resources which can advance their ministries and empower their churches," he said.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderate Baptist churches and individuals, provided \$10,000 in missions funding for the conference -- most of it in the form of 50 scholarships to younger pastors and some women and minorities.

Although most of the participants would be considered SBC moderates, they are not interested in denominational politics, Parham said. "Moderate churches are eager for experiences and resources that will help them engage in healthy, ethically sound church growth," he said.

Although a church-growth conference is something of a departure for an ethics agency, Parham said it fit the organization's purpose. "I know of no ethical issue more important than the way the church exists in the world," he said. "The way we understand the Bible, make decisions and grow the community of faith are core ethics issues for Baptists."

While Southern Baptists ethics involvement has focused on public policy and controversial issues, Parham said, BCE is concentrating on the practice of ethics in local churches. "A lot of the younger ethicists are concerned as much about values as we are issues," he added.

Integrity in church growth has many facets, speakers said. Among them:

-- Evangelism integrity. A church must not be so consumed with winning people to Christ that it fails to win them through love and nurture them to maturity, said Dan Yearly, who last year became pastor of the 24,000 member North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, considered the largest Baptist congregation in the West. "I believe the church must walk with two-legged integrity" -- evangelism and discipleship -- he said.

Although, the Phoenix church has baptized 6,000 people since 1986 -- "more baptisms than any church of any kind" -- less than a fourth of those converts attended the church in the past 24 months, Ycary said. That is "a high infant mortality rate," he said. Churches must offer "postnatal as well as prenatal care," he said.

-- Conversion integrity. Conversion is not monolithic, said Bill Leonard, chairman of the religion department at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. Leonard outlined five distinct views of conversion -- planned conversion, lordship conversion, marketing conversion, positive-thinking conversion and propositional conversion.

The trend of rebaptism among Southern Baptists demonstrates current confusion over "what it means to be and stay Christian," Leonard said. He urged participants to make a distinction between the conversion event, which happens at a point in time, and the conversion experience, which lasts a lifetime. He added: "Some persons say 'yes' to that grace in such small increments, as if it were there all along."

-- Ethical integrity. Ethical church growth begins with ethical ministers, said Joel Snider, pastor of Crieewood Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn. Rather than an ethical "checklist" to evaluate growth strategies, Snider prescribed three personal ethics for ministers: The ethic of work -- "If you're not willing to work, you will be looking for a cheap trick or the right gimmick." The ethic of stewardship -- "It is not my church. It is not your church. It is the church of Jesus Christ." The ethic of love -- "Growing a church is not a game or a competition or an ego stroke. It's about loving people."

-- Worship integrity. "People were made to worship, said Paul Basden, pastor of Brookwood Baptist Church in Birmingham. Worship is "the primary corporate act a congregation does." People join churches for many reasons, but they "will stay as long as they sense they are being brought into the presence of God," he said.

Church growth is more than numbers, Basden said. It is "growing up," that is, maturing spiritually; "growing down," being grounded in truth; "growing in," deepening in fellowship; and "growing out," through evangelism and missions.

-- Mission integrity. "Jesus intends the church ... to take the gospel where people are," said James Denison, pastor of Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta. But the church's tendency is "to wait on its community to come and find it," he said. To have mission integrity, churches need to connect people with the gospel "at the point of their need," Denison said.

-- Spiritual integrity. "Empty pews is not our problem but empty people in our pews," said Gary Furr, pastor of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church in Birmingham. Church growth in a market-oriented society must heed the spiritual hunger people feel and not see those yearning for God as merely "another potential customer," Furr warned. To nurture to the life of the Spirit, churches can involve people in small groups and create "quiet places through retreats and workshops, etc.

BCE is planning a similar conference next October on church growth and leadership integrity. A conference on the family is planned for Feb. 27-28, 1995.

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Associate director leaves Baptist Center for Ethics

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Gene Lovelace has resigned after one year as associate director of the Baptist Center for Ethics, a Nashville, Tenn.-based clearinghouse for resources on Christian ethics..

Lovelace, 39, said he has accepted a job with a long-time acquaintance selling automated office equipment at a firm in Nashville, where he will specialize in church markets.

Lovelace said he began his employment with the ethics agency with an understanding it would be evaluated after the first year. His resignation coincided with the first anniversary of his employment, he said.

Robert Parham, BCE executive director, said he was "surprised" by Lovelace's decision to resign. He said Lovelace "played a very important role at a number of different junctures in building BCE into a positive ethics resource and service to local churches." Lovelace will probably continue to work with the agency on a contract basis, Parham added.

"I feel like I laid some good building blocks in place for BCE in its future," Lovelace said. "I will continue as Robert and I negotiate, to have input or to promote the work of BCE."

Lovelace, a seminary graduate with 12 years' experience as a minister of education in Baptist churches, has specialized in ethics education while at the BCE.

Parham said the agency's board of directors will "spend a number of months" evaluating the staff structure before deciding whether to seek to replace Lovelace. "Ethics education is clearly a major priority of what we're doing," he said. "That's not going to change. The issue is, how do you do that with personnel?"

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Fired Methodist minister loses discrimination suit

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A fired United Methodist Church minister alleging sex and race discrimination has lost her suit against the church's Northern Illinois Conference.

Without comment, the U.S. Supreme Court refused Oct. 11 to review lower court rulings that the First Amendment prohibits courts from intervening in employment disputes affecting clergy.

Darreyl M. Young is a female African American who served for four years as a probationary minister in the church. When she was denied a promotion and terminated, Young sued, claiming Methodist officials violate a federal ban on discrimination based on sex and race.

A federal district court dismissed the lawsuit, holding that the constitutional separation of church and state prevented the court from considering Young's claim.

Upholding the district court, a federal appeals court said religious bodies may make "apparently arbitrary decisions" affecting the employment of clergy and remain "free from civil review having done so."

Young had asked the high court to review the lower court rulings, arguing that the federal Civil Rights Act's ban on racial and sexual discrimination is a neutral, generally applicable law that outweighs the church's right to free exercise of religion.

In other actions Oct. 11, the Supreme Court:

-- refused to review a federal appeals court's ruling that the presence of a 43-foot-high concrete Latin cross in a San Diego park violates the California Constitution's ban against religious preference by government. San Diego officials wanted the high court to hear arguments that lower federal courts should have abstained from deciding state constitutional issues and that the case should be returned for a state court to decide those issues.

-- declined to intervene in a zoning dispute between Alhambra, Calif., officials and a convent that operates a Catholic girls school on a 20-acre site in the city. The Ramona Convent of the Holy Names sued the city after refused to rezone nearly two acres of the school property to sell it to a private developer. City officials said the 2 acre parcel was too small for uses permitted on properties zoned as "open space." A California appeals court sided with the city, saying the First Amendment does not require it to rezone the property.

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-- By Larry Chesser

Legislation introduced to curb religious harassment at work

WASHINGTON (ABP) – A New York congressman introduced a bill Oct. 6 designed to protect religious freedom in the workplace.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., introduced the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (H.R. 5233). If approved the bill would amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to restore the requirement that employers attempt to accommodate the religious practices of employees.

Title VII requires employers to accommodate an employee's religious practices unless such action poses undue hardship on the business. But Nadler said that protection has been eroded by two recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions.

"This anti-discrimination statute was designed to ensure that religious Americans not be forced to choose between their jobs and their religious obligations -- such as observing the Sabbath or other religious days, or wearing religiously mandated articles -- and their jobs," Nadler said. "Title VII struck a reasonable balance between the religious rights of working people and the needs of private business.

"Unfortunately, in two separate decisions, the Supreme Court upset this delicate balance."

In *Trans World Airlines v. Hardison*, the court effectively relieved employers of any meaningful obligation to accommodate the religious practices of their employees, he said. And in *Ansonia Board of Education v. Philbrook*, the court ruled that any reasonable accommodation satisfies the Title VII requirement, meaning the employer did not have to consider more onerous alternatives suggested by the employee, he said.

"Accommodating the religious practices of employees is fair, reasonable, good business sense and entirely feasible in the workplace," he added.

Brent Walker, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, said the religious liberty agency supports the bill.

The two court decisions "continue to reflect a gross insensitivity to religious liberty concerns in the workplace," Walker said. "I would hope that those individuals and groups that screamed the loudest about the proposed EEOC religious harassment guidelines will get behind this bill."

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission withdrew guidelines on workplace harassment after several months of criticism from groups within the religious community.

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– By Pam Parry

Jury still out on the record of 103rd Congress

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) – Will the 103rd Congress be remembered for its accomplishments or the major reform initiatives it failed to move?

In the first session, under a new administration, Congress appeared headed toward breaking the gridlock of recent years, approving several pieces of legislation designed to enhance the lives of Americans, such as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the Brady handgun control bill and the Family Leave Act.

Congress approved several education initiatives, a crime bill, a deficit reduction plan, a national service law and confirmed two justices to the U.S. Supreme Court. Lawmakers also approved a bill making it a crime to blo

access to abortion clinics, damage property and injure patients or clinic staff.

But several major reform initiatives stalled as lawmakers scrambled to recess before the Nov. 8 elections. Congress failed to approve bills on health care, lobby disclosure, campaign finance, welfare and civil rights for homosexuals. (A lame-duck session has been scheduled for late November to vote on the world trade agreement)

In its final days, the Congress also grappled with other bills of interest to Baptists:

-- The American Indian Religious Freedom Act (H.R. 4230) was approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate prior to adjournment. The bill would allow the sacramental use of peyote by Native Americans in their religious worship.

The ceremonial use of the peyote cactus as a religious sacrament has been protected by federal regulation since 1965. At least 28 states have enacted laws that protect such use. The lack of uniformity in state laws and the 1990 Supreme Court decision in *Oregon v. Smith* that said religious practitioners were not protected by the First Amendment prompted the need for the bill, according to supporters.

Robert Perego of the Native American Rights Fund said, "This Congress will go down in history as the religious freedom Congress. This is a very important first step in religious freedom for all of Indian country. It is imperative that Congress and the administration take care of unfinished business next year by enacting legislation that will protect Native worship at sacred sites, the religious use of eagle feathers and the Native prisoner worship."

-- The Lobby Disclosure Act (H.R. 823, S. 349) fell victim to a Senate Republican filibuster in the waning days of the second session of the 103rd Congress. Despite overwhelming approval for the original bill in both chambers, only the House approved the conference report.

The measure would revamp lobbying laws by increasing disclosure requirements and tightening loopholes on activities designed to influence government. A major provision of the bill would establish an office of lobbyist registration and public disclosure, requiring anyone who lobbies to register and file reports with that office.

The measure would have brought the most sweeping lobby reform in nearly five decades.

The bill would exempt churches and religious organizations, correcting overbroad language in the original version that presented a risk that churches might have to report activities simply because they speak on public issues, said Brent Walker, general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington-based religious liberty watchdog organization.

"We worked hard to craft adequate protection for religion," Walker said. But that didn't stop opponents in the waning days of debate from "raising bogus church-state concerns" to help kill the bill, he added.

The new Congress will convene in January 1995.

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