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August 2, 2000

(00-68)

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**Judge blocks Ten Commandments  
display at Kentucky state Capitol**

By Trennis Henderson

FRANKFORT, Ky. (ABP) -- Kentucky's six-foot granite monument inscribed with the Ten Commandments will remain in storage -- at least for now.

The monument, donated to the state in 1971 by the Fraternal Order of Eagles, is at the center of the latest legal controversy over displaying the Ten Commandments. It sat on the Capitol grounds for several years before being placed in storage during a construction project.

A legislative resolution directing that the monument be reinstalled on the Capitol grounds in Frankfort was ruled unconstitutional July 27 by U.S. District Judge Joseph Hood.

Corey Bellamy, a spokesman for Attorney General Ben Chandler, said July 28 that Chandler had not yet determined whether the state will appeal the ruling.

"The attorney general's office is working with the finance and administrative cabinet and the governor's office to make that decision," Bellamy said. "We respect the court's order, but we'll determine what step to take next, whether or not to appeal."

Senate Joint Resolution 57 was signed into law April 21 by Gov. Paul Patton. It called for the monument to be placed on permanent display on the Capitol grounds as "part of a historical and cultural display to remind Kentuckians of the biblical foundations of the laws of the Commonwealth."

The resolution was challenged in a lawsuit filed July 10 by the American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky.

ACLU officials filed suit earlier this year against a Kentucky school district and two counties for posting the Ten Commandments. U.S. District Judge Jennifer Coffman ordered the documents removed from the school and county courthouses pending the outcome of that case.

The ACLU's case against the state did not challenge other sections of the resolution that encourage teachers and school administrators to post and teach from historic documents, including the Ten Commandments. ACLU leaders have indicated they will file suit against schools, however, if they perceive the commandments are posted in a way that violates the First Amendment.

In the latest ruling, Judge Hood sided with the ACLU in declaring the Capitol display unconstitutional. Citing Coffman's opinion that "the Ten Commandments are a distinctly religious document," Hood rejected arguments by Assistant Attorney General Jennifer Carrico that the Capitol display was intended to highlight the commandments' historical significance, not to promote religion.

"A reasonable observer would interpret this display as the Commonwealth's endorsement of Christianity," Hood wrote, noting that "the Commonwealth cannot favor one religion without disfavoring another."

"The function of our Constitution is to insure that the majority protects the views of the minority," Hood added. "The majority cannot by legislative fiat impose its views on the minority."

Rep. Tom Riner of Louisville, who proposed the Ten Commandments display, told reporters he is disappointed with the ruling. "We were not trying to promote religion," he said. "We were simply trying to recognize the historical origin of our foundation of law."

"I don't believe we have a flawed argument," he told the Louisville Courier-Journal. "I believe it's a flawed judiciary that would misconstrue the historical recognition of our precedent legal code as a violation of the establishment clause of the Constitution."

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## **Kentucky Baptist Children's Homes files motion to dismiss ACLU suit**

By Trennis Henderson

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Attorneys for Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children have filed a motion calling for a lawsuit filed in April by the American Civil Liberties Union to be dismissed.

ACLU officials filed the suit in federal court on behalf of a former children's home employee fired in 1998 because she is a homosexual.

The motion to dismiss challenges the ACLU's claim that the child care agency's hiring practices against homosexuals constitute religious discrimination. Such a ruling by the court would force "religious

organizations to hire homosexuals while employers without a religious affiliation remain free not to do so," the response notes.

The ACLU claims that state funds channeled to the KBHC for child care services is a violation of the First Amendment's establishment of religion clause. Calling that argument "fundamentally flawed," attorneys for the KBHC countered, "The establishment clause does not bar the funding of religious organizations merely because the organization has a religious inspiration and affiliation."

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## **House lawmakers approve faith-based funding measure**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- In a rare show of bipartisanship in an election year, House lawmakers passed a bill that would boost business efforts in impoverished communities and allow houses of worship to receive tax funds to provide social services.

The Community Renewal and New Markets Act won approval July 25 by a 394-27 vote. It would establish new tax breaks, loan programs, housing credits and business incentives in economically impoverished areas. President Clinton has already agreed to sign it if the Senate approves the measure.

It is unclear, however, if the measure is constitutional. It includes a controversial program known as "charitable choice" that would allow houses of worship to receive tax dollars to provide drug rehabilitation and other services.

While making houses of worship eligible for funds, the bill could also open churches to new regulations. Its states that government can "apply to religious organizations the same eligibility conditions in designating programs as are applied to other nonprofit private organizations."

It also would require a faith-based group receiving money to bear the burden of locating and referring a secular alternative treatment program to individuals who object to the religious character of the program.

The bill would bar federal and state governments from requiring faith-based groups to remove religious art, icons, scripture and other symbols. It also would allow religious groups to receive tax funds while continuing their long-held exemption from the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That exemption -- intended to permit religious organizations to hire only those that share their faith -- allows discrimination in hiring.

For those reasons, Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., opposed the charitable-choice initiative. "Civil rights laws should apply to federally funded programs," Scott said on the House floor. He said the measure would allow officials at a faith-based drug treatment program to "look a job applicant in the eye and say that, although this is being run with federal taxpayers' money, they do not qualify for a job, because they do not hire their kind because of religion."

Scott read a letter from civil and religious liberties groups opposed to charitable choice, calling it "a frontal assault on the First Amendment."

The organizations, which include the Baptist Joint Committee, the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, People For the American Way and others, stated that the bill would also entangle church and state. "Despite the provisions in charitable choice that purport to protect the religious autonomy of institutions that receive tax money, the government will regulate what it funds." The group said regulations would come in the form of government oversight and monitoring.

But Rep. James Talent, R-Mo., a sponsor of the measure, told reporters following the vote, "We have tried to protect religious groups from government strings."

Talent said the measure is constitutional because the individual will be able to choose which program -- religious or secular -- he or she wishes to participate in. "That breaks the link between state action and religious support," he said.

He said the measure has already been approved in other laws, including the welfare reform laws. And he said the inclusion of faith-based organizations is "vitaly important."

Talent said, "This bill reflects the belief that insofar as we can constitutionally do it, bringing faith-based groups into the center of these communities is a good thing."

Talent told Associated Baptist Press that faith-based drug programs -- such as those run by the Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan -- would be eligible to participate as long as they had a proven three-year track record in the area.

Talent also acknowledged that many religious groups have not been participating in charitable choice provisions already signed into law out of a fear of state regulations. He said some religious communities will jump at the chance to participate, while others "which have had an experience with government regulation that has been more negative, may be a little more careful."

The Senate has yet to act on the measure, but a majority of senators did recently support a broader version of charitable choice in an amendment to another bill, which ultimately failed to receive the necessary three-fifths vote. It was sponsored by Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa.

Talent said, "We're gonna need to change" the Santorum language.

Scott and 26 other lawmakers who voted against the measure are up against the leadership of their own party. Vice President Al Gore has voiced support for charitable choice along with his primary opponent in the presidential race, Texas Gov. George Bush.

And the White House released "talking points" in favor of the community renewal package. It states, in part, that faith-based groups can "play a valuable role in addressing substance abuse. At the same time, the administration has made clear that charitable choice provisions must be implemented consistent with the full respect for the constitutional line between church and state. The current version of this bill satisfies this constitutional prerequisite."

In a related matter, the American Jewish Congress filed the first direct constitutional challenge to charitable choice in a July 24 Texas lawsuit. A group of Christian churches in Texas used state dollars to buy Bibles and urge the poor to build a relationship with Jesus, according to the Jewish organization's complaint.

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## **Baptist Life Flight crew killed in copter crash**

By Johnny Pierce

SYLVESTER, Ga. (ABP) -- A Baptist Life Flight helicopter crashed July 24 in rural Georgia, killing the three-member crew on board. The accident occurred in a swampy area about 15 miles from Tifton as the helicopter was returning to its base at the Georgia Baptist Healthcare System's hospital in Sylvester.

According to the Atlanta Constitution, those killed were pilot Bart Bradshaw, 31; flight nurse Renee Chapman, 29; and paramedic Michael Elam, 28. The crew had delivered a critically ill patient from a rural medical facility to a hospital in Savannah.

The National Transportation and Safety Board is investigating the accident. It was the first accident of any kind for the helicopter service that began in Atlanta in 1981 and has been widely praised for its life-saving missions.

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## **Creed to be scholar-in-residence at Baptist Joint Committee**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- A church history professor and former dean at George W. Truett Theological Seminary will serve this fall as a scholar-in-residence at the Baptist Joint Committee.

Brad Creed will spearhead educational activities at the religious-liberty agency in Washington, D.C., and engage in speaking and writing projects on Baptist principles and religious liberty.

In addition, Creed will teach a course this fall titled "Baptist History and Identity" at The John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Falls Church, Va.

Creed, who resigned last spring as dean of the 6-year-old seminary in Waco, Texas, is on a brief sabbatical before returning to the classroom.

"The timing couldn't have been better to have someone of Brad's caliber to serve the BJC as a scholar in residence," said BJC Executive Director Brent Walker.

"He's a first-rate church historian and a passionate advocate for religious liberty," Walker added.

Creed served as dean at Truett from 1996 to 2000. During that time, enrollment grew from 92 students to 194. Truett operates within the Baylor University structure, and Baylor's deans serve on three-year contracts renewable at the pleasure of the president.

Creed's decision to step down as dean was instigated by Baylor University President Robert Sloan. Sloan praised Creed for his contributions during Truett's founding years but said different skills are needed for the next phase of the seminary's life.

Creed is currently in Mexico and was unavailable for comment.

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## **Philadelphia pastor jeopardizes tax status by endorsing Bush, church-state group says**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Comments made by a Baptist pastor July 31 via satellite to Republican National Convention delegates may have violated federal tax law by endorsing Texas Gov. George W. Bush from the pulpit, according to a Washington-based organization.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State is asking the Internal Revenue Service to investigate comments made by Herbert Lusk, pastor of Greater Exodus Baptist Church in North Philadelphia. Americans United said Lusk crossed the line of appropriate activity by a house of worship under IRS Code.

Speaking from his church's pulpit, Lusk said, "We are supporting Gov. Bush, and we are supporting him because we know that he understands that we must give faith a chance."

He also said: "Mr. Bush, we are praying for you. Keep the faith. We love you. And we love you because we know that you have a testimony."

Lusk departed from his scripted remarks. In his prepared remarks released by the GOP, Lusk also said his church has an after-school youth program, a youth-enrichment and mentoring center, computer labs, a community-development credit union and a welfare-to-work initiative. The church also plans to begin a charter school.

"Faith makes the difference," Lusk said. "That is why I am excited about supporting George W. Bush for president," the press release stated. Lusk said Bush is "committed to removing the current barriers to supporting faith-based action through charitable choice."

Charitable choice is a legislative measure that would fund faith-based organizations, including pervasively sectarian ones such as churches, with tax dollars for social-service ministries.

Americans United Executive Director Barry Lynn sent a letter to Charles Rossotti, commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, requesting an investigation into the matter.

According to an AU press release, Lynn wrote, "It appears that Rev. Lusk has violated federal tax law by announcing that 'we' -- meaning his church -- are supporting candidate Bush."

Lynn added: "This seems to be a blatant violation of IRS regulations banning intervention in partisan politics by non-profit groups. Accordingly, I urge you to conduct an investigation into the statements of Rev. Lusk at Greater Exodus Baptist and take whatever steps you deem necessary to make certain that this church obeys the law."

Lusk was unavailable for comment. Associated Baptist Press contacted his church and a spokesman said Lusk was attending GOP convention events.

Federal tax law requires that churches and other non-profit groups holding a 501(c)(3) status may not endorse or oppose candidates for public office.

Federal courts have upheld a decision by the IRS to revoke the tax-exempt status of a church that placed newspaper ads days before the 1992 election, claiming it would be a sin to vote for then-Gov. Bill Clinton.

"Rev. Lusk is free to endorse any candidate he wants as a private citizen," Lynn said. "But in his official role as pastor of a church he must refrain from engaging in partisan politicking. I hope the IRS takes swift action to correct this outrageous abuse."

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## **Franklin Graham leads GOP in prayer, asks forgiveness for nation's moral erosion**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Baptist evangelist Franklin Graham concluded the first night of ceremonies at the Republican National Convention with prayer, lamenting the erosion of morals and a faith in wealth, technology and prosperity over a faith in God.

The son of famous Baptist evangelist Billy Graham also asked God to "watch over and protect George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, and their wonderful family, as they seek the highest office in this land and to serve their country at their own personal sacrifice."

Graham also prayed for the family of GOP vice presidential nominee Dick Cheney and "for all who seek public office this year."

"We ask that your will be done, that you give us leaders who acknowledge you -- not just with their lips but with their lives," he added.

Graham said, "We confess to you tonight that as a nation we have taken our eyes off you. We have put our faith and trust not in you but in our wealth, technology and prosperity."

He added: "We have allowed our morals to erode to such depths as to accept violence as entertainment and immorality as an accepted way of life. The Bible says, 'Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.'"

Graham prayed, "We recognize our failures and the injustice that still plagues our society and acknowledge that there is still much work that needs to be done."

Graham sat next to former President George Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush and could not be reached for comment before or after his remarks.

GOP delegates have heard prayers from a variety of faith leaders at the convention, including a Jewish Rabbi and a Muslim, who was the first Muslim to lead a benediction at one of the major political party conventions, according to the American Muslim Council.

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## **Texas GOP delegates lead prayer protest over gay speaker**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Risking the unified convention sought by Republican leaders, a group of Texas delegates quietly bowed their heads in prayer to protest an Aug. 1 speech by an openly gay member of Congress.

Rep. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., spoke for four minutes on U.S. trade policy. He did not mention his homosexuality, but that didn't stop Texas Eagle Forum President Cathie Adams from leading the protest just yards away from the convention podium.

Many Texas delegates did not participate, but about a dozen could be seen with bowed heads. One silent protestor closed his eyes, bowed his head and raised a sign indicating "there is a way out" of the homosexual lifestyle.

With memories of past conventions featuring heated debates between religious conservatives and fiscal conservatives over social issues including abortion and gay rights, organizers of this year's Republican convention took pains to portray a unified party to a national TV audience.

But Adams, also a member of the GOP national platform committee, told Associated Baptist Press that it was not enough that Kolbe remained silent on the issue of homosexuality, "because all the pundits will be announcing his sexual preference."

"I do not want our children and grandchildren to see us in this arena without a clear message," she said. "We are not going to send out a mixed message. This is not acceptable."

The Eagle Forum is a national conservative pro-family organization. Adams said the protestors considered walking off the floor, but time and logistics made it impossible. "Prayer is the most effective thing," she said.

"We all have a common goal and that is to get Governor Bush elected," Adams added. "But we are not to capitulate on principles in the process."

Jerry Falwell, a prominent Southern Baptist pastor and GOP leader, said earlier he had no problem with Kolbe speaking to the convention.

"I have no problem with that at all," Falwell said. "I brought 200 gays and lesbians to Thomas Road Baptist Church back in October last year. We met for a weekend -- not on the rightness or wrongness of the act. The Bible is clear that homosexuality is a sin. But to meet about how we can build bridges, how we can assuage violence and wild rhetoric on both sides."

He added: "In this audience here -- just like any church on Sunday, there will be a significant number of gays and lesbians. I love them, I just don't agree with what they do."

A spokesman for Pat Robertson, founder and president of the Christian Coalition, also supported Kolbe's right to speak. "He's qualified to speak on trade issues," the spokesman said. "We're not going to make it an issue and we certainly hope he doesn't."

The spokesman said Robertson has a ministry that has led a lot of people out of homosexuality, but Robertson has never discussed the issue with Kolbe.

Kolbe is chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Treasury, Postal Service and General Government. He led the efforts to pass the North American Free Trade Agreement and to pass Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China.

Kolbe said: "We believe the cause for trade is not just monetary, but moral. It is not just a matter of commerce, but a matter of conscience. The world awaits our people, our products and our principles. America must seize this opportunity."

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## **Trent Lott supports Baptist-autonomy principle, Southern Baptist women pastor statement**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., a Southern Baptist, told Associated Baptist Press that he supports the Baptist principle of autonomy of the local church. However, he also supports the Southern Baptist Convention's new "Baptist Faith and Message" statement against women pastors.

Lott is just one of several top U.S. leaders that are Baptist, including President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and several congressional leaders.

In a far-ranging interview on the floor of the Republican National Convention, Lott said: "One good thing about the Baptist convention is that all the churches are autonomous. There's no binding rules. We don't dictate what you do at First Baptist Nashville" or at other Baptist churches.

Despite that, Lott said he agrees with the SBC statement against women being pastors. He joked, "My wife doesn't agree with that, but she's Presbyterian."

Lott said he participates in a weekly Bible-study group that includes at least one Democratic senator, but he didn't want to talk about specifics of something he considers a private matter. "We don't talk about that," he said.

He also said the Southern Baptist controversies have probably been "greatly exaggerated" by the national media "who as usual don't know what they're talking about."

"I do believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible, and I feel very strongly about my faith and my denomination. Now those that want to do things a different way, they've got that right. They can go do it another way," Lott added.

Lott also discussed congressional measures involving religion and voiced support for funding of faith-based social service programs.

He said the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act -- recently approved in both houses of Congress -- was not as strong a bill as he desired but is still helpful in land-use regulations that churches face. The measure would require state and local governments to show a compelling reason before substantially burdening religious exercises through zoning regulations.

Lott also endorsed the American Community Renewal and New Markets Act. The bill was approved in the House and "has a chance in the Senate," Lott said, "but it's late and we have very limited time in which to do things."

The measure -- also supported by President Clinton -- is designed to boost impoverished communities. It includes a controversial measure known as "charitable choice" to allow tax dollars to flow to houses of worship to provide social services, such as drug-rehabilitation programs.

"You have to be worried about regulations and some of the faith-based organizations may be worried about that also," Lott said. But the religious community is helping people in places in America "where there's nobody else is there trying to help."

Lott said the Senate may try to include the community-renewal bill in another legislative package that is moving. "We need to encourage this public-private partnership," he said.

Lott said people of faith should "absolutely be directly, actively, intimately involved in the political system and governing in America." Pointing to founders George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, Lott asked: "How many times did they invoke God's blessing on this country? I think we should have that today. They established that separation of church and state. They did not mean to exclude church from state."

Lott added, "Of course, it can always go overboard. I don't think we should impose our beliefs on other people."

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## **Most sought voter: soccer mom, Bible study mom, Burger King mom**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Amid the 2000 Republican National Convention, three different labels have been placed on the female vote that is so important as the GOP seeks to attain control of the White House.

The so-called "Soccer Mom" -- the demographic group also wooed in previous elections -- is being bumped off the field by "Bible Study Moms," according to the Beverly LaHaye Institute.

Janice Shaw Crouse, senior fellow of the institute, said a new Wirthlin Worldwide poll shows that these moms "are concerned about the world in which their children are growing up. They are disturbed about the decline in moral values and the increase in crime."

The poll looked at 1,000 adults and specifically at "how born-again Christian mothers are voting in the upcoming presidential election." Crouse said Bible Study Moms believe the country is headed in the wrong direction, are pro-life and have two or three children.

"These moms are strongly conservative and proudly consider themselves homemakers," she added.

But Jim Wallis, founder of a religious movement against poverty called Call to Renewal, told participants at the Shadow Conventions that politicians should also pay attention to "Burger King Mom."

The Shadow Conventions are being held to draw attention to themes and groups that organizers say are ignored by the two major political parties.

Wallis said Burger King Mom is based on a woman he saw working at a drive-through window at a fast-food restaurant. Between taking food orders, she ran over to take care of her three children who were there because she couldn't afford day care.

"She was helping her kids with their homework at four o'clock at the Burger King in between cars at the drive-in window. She is Burger King mom and she is not on the political agenda," Wallis said.

Wallis said "it's time to stop the rhetoric that blames and find the solutions that work," in overcoming poverty.

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## **Falwell says religious conservatives energized by Bush-Cheney ticket**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Speaking on the floor of the Republican National Convention July 31, Southern Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell called the Bush-Cheney ticket a "winning combination" and said "there is more excitement today among religious conservatives than since Ronald Reagan days."

In a convention floor interview with Associated Baptist Press, Falwell voiced support for Texas Gov. George Bush and his vice presidential pick Dick Cheney.

"This is an excellent platform," he said. "We have two fine candidates in George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Both are fiscal conservatives, political conservatives and social conservatives. We couldn't ask for more."

Falwell was an independent Baptist when he formed the Moral Majority, a grassroots movement credited with galvanizing conservative evangelical support for President Reagan. His church, Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., became Southern Baptist two years ago when it joined a breakaway conservative state convention.

Falwell has recently come under fire for his political involvement. Particularly, Americans United for Church State Separation has charged that Falwell's People of Faith 2000 voter-registration effort illegally uses tax-exempt dollars for partisan political purposes.

Falwell was unabashed about his aims for the People of Faith 2000 campaign.

"It is our prayer that we get a few million people to the polls Nov. 7 who were not there in '96, voting of course for George W. Bush." Falwell said.

He also told ABP, "I don't believe in separation of church and state so I obviously don't worry about it." He said the First Amendment was written to prevent government from infringing on the rights of the church.

Falwell had a short response to a question about various proposals being considered to link government and faith-based groups in financial partnerships. Asked if government regulation might follow tax dollars to religious organizations, Falwell said, "If it does, we'll walk away."

And Falwell supported the inclusion of an openly gay Republican House member -- Rep. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., to address the GOP convention.

"I have no problem with that at all," Falwell said. "I brought 200 gays and lesbians to Thomas Road Baptist Church back in October last year. We met for a weekend -- not on the rightness or wrongness of the act. The Bible is clear that homosexuality is a sin. But to meet about how we can build bridges, how we can assuage violence and wild rhetoric on both sides."

He added, "In this audience here -- just like any church on Sunday, there will be a significant number of gays and lesbians. I love them, I just don't agree with what they do."

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## **GOP platform calls for abortion ban, tax funds for faith-based ministries**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Despite opposition from pro-choice Republicans, party officials kept intact platform language calling for an outright ban on abortions.

Presidential nominee George W. Bush opposes abortion but believes there should be exceptions for rape, incest and the life of the mother. According to new reports, however, the Texas governor will accept the platform to "keep peace with the Republican right."

The GOP platform also endorsed government support of faith-based organizations in dealing with social services, abstinence training and drug treatment.

The GOP platform was approved by a voice vote July 31 as Republicans began their four-day convention with the hopes of gaining control of the White House. While the anti-abortion language remains strong, the platform seeks to offer a new Republican agenda. The call to abolish the Department of Education has been abandoned and the preamble urges the inclusion of minorities in the party.

"We offer not only a new agenda, but also a new approach -- a vision of a welcoming society in which all have a place," states the platform.

"To all Americans, particularly immigrants and minorities, we send a clear message: this is the party of freedom and progress, and it is your home."

The Republican Pro-Choice Coalition failed to force a roll-call vote on the anti-abortion plank, which calls for a "human life" amendment to the Constitution and the appointment of judges who "respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life."

Carlton Veazey, president of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, said abortion decisions should be left "in the hands of a woman, in consultation with her God, faith and conscience and her own personal situation."

He said the GOP abortion plank "insults thinking women and men by ignoring the diversity of views on a profound issue."

"It embodies one religious view about the beginning of life," he continued, "but we all know that different religions have different ideas and beliefs about the beginning of life. As a nation founded on religious liberty, we believe no one religion should dominate and impose its beliefs on all Americans."

The interfaith group held a religious service at a local Philadelphia Presbyterian church July 30 to highlight religious support for reproductive choice. The crowd of more than 200 heard from an abortion

doctor who successfully challenged a ban on "partial-birth" abortion in Nebraska. They also heard from Frances Kissling, director of Catholics for a Free Choice.

But blocks away, anti-abortion protestors lined the Philadelphia streets to form a chain of support for the anti-abortion plank, holding signs that read: "Abortion kills children."

One protestor, Dominic Cordone, a real estate agent from Pennsylvania, told ABP that he is a one-issue voter. "Abortion is murder," the father of 10 said. "You just can't give the right to murder." And he opposed any exception, including rape or incest. He said in cases of rape, the country cannot pass down its appropriate hatred for the rapist to another generation.

He said he would like to see Bush and Cheney "more pro-life."

But other protestors said the GOP candidates have proven their pro-life stance.

Jennifer Pierce said her faith drives her to be anti-abortion because "life is a sacred gift from God." She described the "choice" in the "pro-choice" movement as choosing "to strip away an innocent life and deprive it of life liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The Family Research Council graded the abortion statement an "A" and gave the same high mark to the party for "defending marriage and traditional values" as well as "reducing the tax burden on American families."

The GOP platform also touted the controversial "charitable choice" program designed to fund the social-service work of faith-based ministries. Both leading presidential candidates have announced support for the initiative, but many civil and religious groups remain opposed to it on grounds that it violates the separation of church and state.

The platform calls for charitable choice to be expanded to all federal social-service programs. The program is currently a part of the 1996 welfare-reform laws and has been included in a plethora of legislative initiatives recently.

The GOP criticized the Clinton administration for attempting to block the initiative by "insisting that all symbols of religion must be removed or covered over." The platform said the result is that faith-based groups are "blacklisted because they will never conceal nor compromise the faith that makes them so effective in changing lives."

Also, faith-based organizations were sought to deal with non-marital pregnancy. And the GOP plank opposed school-based clinics that would provide referrals, counseling and related services for contraception and abortion.

Other statements in the platform:

--Defended court challenges to the Defense of Marriage Act, which restricts same-sex marriages. The platform also said "sexual preference" should not be given special legal protection or standing in the law.

-- Supported right of religious leaders to speak out on public issues and opposed any effort of government to regulate or ban religious symbols from the workplace.

-- Affirmed the constitutional right to bear arms and opposed the federal licensing of law-abiding gun owners and national gun registration.

-- Affirmed the right of public schools, courthouses and other public buildings to post copies of the Ten Commandments.

-- Supported a ban on Internet gambling.

## **'Unconventional' Shadow Conventions addresses poverty, election financing, drugs**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Departing from scripted speeches and carefully choreographed Republican and Democratic national conventions, a broad coalition of activists is focusing on poverty, campaign-finance reform and a failed U.S. drug policy.

The first of two Shadow Conventions 2000 took place several blocks away from the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. The group also plans an alternative convention in Los Angeles to flank the Democratic National Convention.

Conveners promised to be "unconventional" and delivered as Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., cut his remarks short and was nearly heckled off the stage when he departed from his campaign-finance reform message.

McCain backed his former rival, Texas Gov. George Bush for president and touted Republican policies, saying that his party's conservative policies were voters' best option.

"What about the separation of church and state?" said one participant from the balcony after McCain backed the involvement of faith-based organizations in solving the country's social problems. Convinced that McCain was toeing the party line, other hecklers shouted, "This is not what we came for."

Just what did they come for?

One of the conveners of the Shadow Conventions, syndicated columnist Arrianna Huffington, said it was out of a "collective longing to fix our political system" and to address issues being avoided by the two major parties.

Huffington said leaders in both parties need to be driven into "donor detox," and some should raise their hand and admit, "I am a fund-raiser-aholic."

Unless the problem of money in politics is solved, she said, "nothing else will ever change."

Huffington -- a former conservative GOP activist -- admits to having changed her mind on a number of issues, and how to solve poverty is one of them. She said the country is forming two segments -- a wealthy class whose voice in the political process is heard and the others without money whose voices are not heard.

Huffington also said America needs to move from "incarceration to treatment" in combating drug use.

In introducing another convener, Call to Renewal head Jim Wallis, Huffington called the minister, author and activist an "inspiration" to her. Wallis addressed the issue of poverty.

Wallis, who first started the renewal group as an alternative voice to the Religious Right, pointed to the fact that both the Republican and Democratic candidates have endorsed the idea of "charitable choice" to fund faith-based organizations.

Wallis is more open to the idea than many religious and civil-liberties groups who oppose the plan on church-state separation grounds.

But Wallis said: "If you want to be partners with faith-based organizations -- churches and synagogues and mosques then the terms of partnership are these. You must put the people and the families whom we live and work with on your political agenda."

With so many politicians lauding the good economy, Wallis asked, "What's all our prosperity for anyway?" He said there is "record prosperity and rising inequality."

"The rising tide has lifted all the yachts, but not all the boats," he said to a young crowd of activists holding signs designed to look similar to those displaying names of state delegations on the convention floors of the two major political parties. But these signs read: "disillusioned," "disregarded," and "disrespected."

Wallis admonished both Republican and Democratic leaders to heed the words of biblical prophet Amos: "Take away from me your useless noise and empty festivals but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

The crowd viewed a sobering video by minority children who documented the "other" Camden, Pa. Hours later, GOP leaders were planning to enjoy a boat show on the Camden waterfront.

But the video showed pictures from the Camden across the river -- a predominantly African-American and Hispanic community, where buildings are condemned, drug dealing is rampant and violence is common.

Shadow Convention participants also heard from Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., Rep. Tom Campbell, R-Calif., Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga. Among other speakers were actor Warren Beatty and comedian Al Franken.

Jesse Jackson addressed the audience to condemn the use of the death penalty in America.

Other Shadow Convention conveners included Deepak Bhargava of the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support, Chuck Collins of United for a Fair Economy, Scott Harshbarger of Common Cause, Ellen Miller of Public Campaign and Ethan Nadelmann of The Lindesmith Center.

Miller called for public financing of campaigns, saying, "If someone's got to own this government, it might as well be us." She said the major parties' political conventions have become "private receptions paid for by corporate America."

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## **Alliance of Baptists leader says anti-Cuba policies about votes**

By Kenny Byrd

PHILADELPHIA (ABP) -- Presidential politics are behind the refusal of leaders in both major political parties to end the U.S. embargo and other sanctions against Cuba, a Baptist leader has charged.

Following the strengthening of language in the Republican National Committee platform to continue sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba, Alliance of Baptists Executive Director Stan Hastey said, "Leaders of both political parties continue to apply a curious double standard with respect toward U.S. policy toward Cuba."

Republican lawmakers from Florida hailed the GOP platform language as the "most significant plank on Cuba ever." It calls for continued economic sanctions against Cuba until the government releases political prisoners, allows freedom of expression and opposition to political activity.

The platform goes further to call on American support of Cuban dissidents and charges that Cuba acts as a refuge for criminals fleeing the U.S. judicial system.

"We will keep tightening the screws on Fidel Castro," said one Republican House member.

Rep. Bill McCollum, R-Fla., said the platform language has never been stronger. He said unless Castro frees political prisoners and holds free elections, "we will encourage dissidents."

The Alliance, a liberal splinter group from the Southern Baptist Convention, has declared itself in opposition to the embargo and in favor of full economic and political relations annually for six years.

And Hastey, who has traveled to Cuba 13 times over the last seven years, said he recognizes the lack of freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech there. But if it makes sense to improve U.S. relations with China and Vietnam through trade agreements and diplomatic relations, he asked, "Why not do the same with Cuba?"

"What is it that causes us to continue to punish a tiny island nation scarcely 100 miles from our own shores?" Hastey asked. "The simple answer is electoral politics."

Hastey said Florida is a key state in presidential electoral politics, and the way to win it "is to pacify the rabidly anti-Castro population of that state."

But the GOP Orange County (Fla.) chairman said the plank is based on firm "principles of freedom and democracy, to continue to support in the strongest possible manner the aspirations of the Cuban people to be free from Castro's communist dictatorship."

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