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**Jimmy Carter renounces
Southern Baptist ties (revised)**

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story, which moved last Thursday, has new information in the final three paragraphs.

By Greg Warner

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Former President Jimmy Carter, Southern Baptists' most famous layman, says he feels "excluded" by the Southern Baptist Convention and "can no longer be associated" with the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

As a candidate in 1976 who introduced the term "born again" into the political lexicon, as a president who was criticized for witnessing to world leaders, as a goodwill ambassador through his work with Habitat for Humanity, and as a Sunday school teacher at his small church in Plains, Ga., Carter has been one of the most visible and respected Southern Baptists for 25 years.

But in a letter and press statement released Oct. 19, Carter lamented the new "creedal" direction taken by the SBC. He said the recent changes in the "Baptist Faith and Message" doctrinal statement are "profound and revolutionary" and reflect "an increasingly rigid SBC creed."

"I had never been involved in the political struggle for control of the SBC and have no desire to do so," Carter wrote in the letter, which was mailed to 75,000 Baptists nationwide by the moderate group Texas Baptists Committed. He said he was disappointed that his effort two years ago to promote dialogue between SBC factions failed. "My hope was that, as a traditional Baptist layman, I could find some channel through which I could help fulfill our Christian commitments."

"But since that brief interlude of apparent harmony, I have been disappointed and feel excluded by the adoption of policies and an increasingly rigid SBC creed, including some provisions that violate the basic premises of my Christian faith. I have finally decided that, after 65 years, I can no longer be associated with the Southern Baptist Convention."

"This is a torturous decision to make," Carter added in an interview with Associated Baptist Press. "I do it with anguish and not with any pleasure." Carter, 76, said he could no longer "add my name and my support" to SBC efforts because its leaders "have departed from what I believe."

He decided to go public with his decision after meeting, at his initiation, with moderate Baptist leaders from Texas, Virginia and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"This is strictly personal for me," he told ABP. "I am not trying to speak for my church. ... I'm not going to mount a crusade against anybody. We've had enough of that."

He said he will remain a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains and support the church's recent decision to send half of its missions contributions to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

In his press release, Carter said he and his wife, Rosalynn, want to associate with "other traditional Baptists who continue to share such beliefs as separation of church and state, servanthood and not domination of pastors, local church autonomy, a free religious press, and equality of women."

He lamented the SBC's departure from those beliefs and the exclusion of those who disagree from service in the convention.

"Over the years leaders of the convention have adopted an increasingly rigid creed, called a 'Baptist Faith and Message,' including some provisions that violate the basic tenets of my Christian faith. These premises have become mandatory criteria that must be accepted by employees, by members of committees who control the convention's affairs, and by professors who teach in the SBC-owned seminaries. Obviously, this can have a far-reaching and permanent effect."

Carter told ABP that one particular change in the 2000 doctrinal statement "overrides and explains the other concerns I have" -- the SBC's decision to eliminate language that identifies Jesus Christ as "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted."

"Most disturbing has been the convention's recent decision to remove Jesus Christ, through his words, deeds and personal inspiration, as the ultimate interpreter of the Holy Scriptures," he explained in his press release. "This leaves open making the pastors or executives of the SBC the ultimate interpreters."

The revisions to the SBC's official doctrinal statement in 1998 and this year have become a line in the sand for many moderates after years of being excluded from denominational leadership. The Baptist General Convention of Texas, the largest SBC affiliate, is considering funding changes that would alter the state's traditional relationship with the denomination.

Among controversial changes is a 1998 amendment on the family that calls for women to submit to their husbands. Additional revisions adopted this year weaken references to "soul competency" and state that women cannot be pastors.

SBC conservatives defended the narrower language as reflecting the views of most Southern Baptists and as necessary to guard the denomination against liberalism, which they claim infiltrated seminaries and agencies during the 1960s and 1970s.

Moderates in Texas and elsewhere, however, say the new "Baptist Faith and Message" turns the Bible into an idol by placing it on an equal plane with Christ. They also say announced plans to use the new statement to ensure "doctrinal accountability" violate Baptists' historic aversion to creeds.

In his letter, Carter said, as a Georgia Baptist, he is "quite concerned by the effort of SBC leaders to impose their newly adopted creed on our state convention."

"Our prayer is that we can avoid this divisive action, and adhere to the traditional beliefs that, for generations, have sustained our ancestors and us in a spirit of unity and cooperation," he wrote.

Lacking formal theological training, Carter said he is unqualified "to explain how profound and revolutionary are the changes in the 'Baptist Faith and Message' that are being proposed to unsuspecting Baptists." However, his letter endorsed a taped message on the topic by Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, which was included in the mass mailing.

On the tape, Wade predicted that neither the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message" nor its predecessor, the 1963 version, will be imposed as a creed on Texas Baptists. "We need no creed to define what the Bible says, and we need no confession of faith if it is going to be used as a creed."

"It's a painful thing when people try to dismiss you because you don't 'believe the Bible,'" he added. "I challenge anybody to make that charge stick against Texas Baptists. But I want you to understand we do not worship the Bible. We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ, recorded in Scripture so that we might know him."

Texas Baptists are locked in a dispute with SBC leaders over a proposed budget cut of \$5.3 million to SBC seminaries and selected other entities. A vote on the proposal is scheduled at the BGCT's annual meeting Oct. 30-31 in Corpus Christi.

Carter initiated a meeting in Plains Sept. 28 with David Currie, director of Texas Baptist Committed, and Becky Matheny, director of the moderate Georgia Baptist Heritage Council, during which he shared his convictions about the SBC.

"We said, 'It would be great for Baptists to know how you felt,'" Currie recalled. "He said he was thinking about sending a letter to folks. That's where the idea of linking the [letter and tape] came together."

Carter's letter and Wade's 45-minute tape were mailed beginning Oct. 18 to Texas Baptist Committed's national mailing list at a cost of more than \$75,000, said Currie. Donations were received from the Georgia Baptist Heritage Council and a few individuals -- including \$2,000 from the Carters -- to cover about half the cost, he said. The rest will be borrowed and repaid with future donations.

Currie said the mailing was not intended to influence the Texas vote, but that might be a welcome byproduct. It may also motivate people in other states, he said. "We just want as many people as possible to listen to this tape and realize that the SBC has deserted every historic Baptist principle that Baptists have been committed to," he said.

Carter told ABP the recent decision by directors of the Christian Index, the Georgia Baptist newspaper, to restrict articles and ads promoting the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship "is improper and a violation of freedom of press."

"The fact is that almost every one in Georgia who gives money to CBF is also giving to the Georgia Baptist Convention. And the Christian Index is supposed to represent all Georgia Baptists."

"I don't like that at all," he continued. "That's just a forerunner of things that are pending and just a further imposition of the creed...."

Carter, who in office and since has distinguished himself as a negotiator and reconciler among troubled nations, told ABP he was disappointed that his 1997-98 attempt to bring reconciliation among Southern Baptists failed.

While parties seeking peace can make progress if they are flexible and mutually respectful, he said, "sometimes there is a total recalcitrance that prohibits progress," like the Arab-Israeli disagreement over control of East Jerusalem.

Such an impediment to peace now exists in the SBC, he suggested. The new strictures adopted by Southern Baptists mean that "if you don't accept these premises, then you cannot be a part of the Southern Baptist Convention," he said.

He said he hopes someday Baptists of different stripes can work together in cooperation, humility and service. "I would like to find a home somewhere, in addition to the CBF, where more Baptists can come together."

SBC president James Merritt told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that he views Carter's decision as "an unfortunate turn of events."

Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga., said he believes the former president is "a man of sincere faith," but "he evidently has a set of personal convictions that are at odds with what we believe as Southern Baptists."

Southern Baptists "cannot maintain a relationship with anyone that would come at the expense of what we believe to be biblical truth," Merritt said.

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Midwestern board favors Kansas City relocation

By Tim Palmer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- The Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary board of trustees voted Oct. 17 to make relocation of the seminary within the Kansas City metropolitan area "the preferred option" for the school's future.

Trustees also voted to adopt the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message" as the seminary's articles of faith and to require new faculty to affirm it in writing.

The board also affirmed interim president Michael Whitehead and asked the presidential search committee to continue its work, with Whitehead as a potential candidate.

Meeting Oct. 16-17 at Kansas City's Embassy Suites hotel, the board of trustees spent the majority of its time in closed session. Trustees heard a presentation from Hunt Midwest Real Estate Corp., which is interested in acquiring and developing Midwestern's campus and helping the seminary relocate.

In a two-part motion from a planning and building committee, trustees authorized the committee to negotiate with Hunt Midwest and other firms "for services related to appraisal, land-use planning and various options for developing new facilities." The second part of the motion noted that finding a new site in Kansas City is the board's preferred option.

Trustees ratified an Oct. 7 resolution by their executive committee, which rebuffed rumors that Midwestern might merge with another seminary and move to a different state.

Whitehead told the Missouri Baptist newspaper Word and Way that trustees moved to squelch the rumors because seminary officials were getting calls from people who believed a merger/move was a "done deal" made with the board's knowledge.

A staff member from the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee has promoted the idea of merging Midwestern Seminary with another SBC seminary and moving them, Midwestern officials said.

In adopting the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message," the board directed that all faculty handbooks, employment handbooks and related policies be amended to reflect the revision. The motion "further directs that faculty members, at the time of election or renewal of contracts, sign an "affirmation" of the document. Use of a lengthy questionnaire for prospective faculty will be discontinued.

Missouri trustees Jay Scribner and Kent Cochran introduced the motion to affirm the presidential search committee and interim president Whitehead and to: "Ask him to continue indefinitely until God reveals something differently to him or until the committee brings us a sense of direction."

The motion noted that the board "has full confidence in his administrative ability, leadership and decision making in this present capacity."

Trustees did not discuss in open session a potential \$400,000 funding shortfall from Texas Baptists, but Whitehead talked about it in an interview.

Midwestern started the year with a \$359,000 surplus, he noted, and then it received \$200,000 from Cooperative Program surplus giving. "So we have a year's cushion to watch and see how Texas Baptists resolve their differences," he said.

The seminary has implemented some cost-saving measures, Whitehead said. Class sizes have been increased and the frequency of offering some courses has been decreased, resulting in a \$60,000 annual savings in teaching stipends.

"We'll live with what the Lord gives us," Whitehead said. The seminary's auditor, John Parrish of the firm Keller and Owens, gave a report to trustees and pronounced Midwestern in solid shape financially.

Trustees also approved a tuition increase. Tuition will rise to \$90 per credit hour from the current \$70 for Southern Baptist students; to \$180 from the current \$140 for non-Southern Baptist students; and to \$110 from \$95 for extension students. Also, the \$700 flat rate "cap" on tuition has been removed. These changes will take effect in fall 2001.

In other business, trustees:

- Approved a resolution expressing sympathy and prayer for the family of Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan, who was killed in a plane crash Oct. 16 along with his son Randy and aide Chris Sifford.

- Approved a resolution commending the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message" for "its faithfulness to the teachings of God's Word and as a guide in our 'faith and practice' in the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention."

- Approved the expenditure of \$150,000 for roof and water damage repair for five buildings occupied by students and directed staff to investigate alternatives in light of possible relocation of the campus.

- Authorized the expenditure of up to \$50,000 for start-up costs and operating capital to accommodate growth in the newly reopened child development center through July 2001.

- Adopted a resolution affirming an SBC Executive Committee resolution on the Cooperative Program agreement between the SBC and the Baptist General Convention of Texas, in which the BGCT was criticized for proposing to divert more than \$5 million from SBC causes.

- Approved five-year contract renewals for faculty members Ben Awbrey and Ron Rogers and a one-year renewal for Bruce Merrick.

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SBC leader backing Bush in race for presidency

By Steve DeVane

RALEIGH, N.C. (ABP) -- Southern Baptist Convention leader Richard Land said he wasn't telling people how to vote, but he made it clear that he believes Republican nominee George W. Bush is the presidential candidate who most closely follows the values and beliefs he considers Christian.

Land's comments came Oct. 19 during the Christian Action League of North Carolina meeting at Providence Baptist Church in Raleigh. They were filled with references to Bush, Democratic nominee Al Gore and President Clinton.

The head of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission said he considers the upcoming election between Bush and Gore to be the most important race in the United States since 1860.

The ERLC has prepared a voter guide comparing the platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties. Despite separation of church and state, Land said, churches can and should distribute them to members because they are for voter education and not electioneering.

But, Land said, Gore should not be allowed to call black ministers as he reportedly did from Air Force Two. The vice president called ministers Oct. 14, Land said, urging them to ask their congregations to vote on Election Day.

Land said Gore could make such calls only "as long as the deaf, dumb, blind woman is attorney general," an apparent reference to Janet Reno. "Hopefully, the eight-year sojourn into the 'Department of Justice' becoming the 'obstruction of justice' is coming to an end," he said.

Land told how his mother and father always canceled out each other's vote because they each voted party loyalty. They were both wrong, he said.

"Our loyalty and allegiance does not belong to any party, nor to any candidate," he said. "Our loyalty and allegiance belong to Jesus Christ."

Two deacons at a church where he was serving as interim pastor got upset over a sermon he preached during the impeachment hearings for Clinton, Land said. They told him to quit picking on Clinton, he said, because the president had been good for the economy and if they could they would vote for him again.

Land said he called them "political prostitutes" and "political whores."

"My vote's not for sale," he said. "I'm never going to vote my pocketbook."

While God is neither a Republican nor a Democrat, Land said, God is pro-life, pro-family and not pro-homosexual.

Land also drew parallels between the ongoing abortion debate and the controversy over slavery before the Civil War, he said, noting some editorial writers of the period said they opposed slavery but didn't want to impose their morals on slave owners.

"The slave owner was imposing his immorality on the slave," Land said.

The Supreme Court said at one time that slaves weren't people, he said.

"That should remind us that the Supreme Court can be, and often is, dead wrong," he said.

People who are saved should bring their faith into public policy, Land said. If enough Christians vote, they can use democracy for change.

"As far as I'm concerned, the ACLU and the People for the American Way can get used to it," he said. "We're not going anywhere."

Bush, the governor of Land's home state of Texas, spoke at the ERLC Christian Life Seminar last year. He talked about the "seismic culture shift" in America, but added that if it can shift once, it can shift back, Land said.

Land said the upcoming election marks the clearest choice for president in his life.

As an example, Bush has agreed with the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision that the Boy Scouts did not have to allow homosexuals to be scoutmasters, while Gore has disagreed, Land said.

What he doesn't understand is why four Supreme Court justices would want to allow homosexuals to lead boys on camp-outs in the woods.

"People like that are too dumb to walk," Land told about 50 people attending the meeting. He also said developers of X-rated Web sites have endorsed Gore because they have not been prosecuted in the last seven and a half years. People who want those Web sites to continue shouldn't vote for Bush, he said.

"George W.'s going to throw the book at them," he said.

Bush disagreed with a Supreme Court decision that a prayer in Texas before a high school football game was not allowed because it used a government-owned microphone, Land said, while Gore supported the decision.

Land said if people like him don't win the "struggle for the soul of America," there might not be any old-folks homes, because "Jack Kevorkian is the poster boy for the other side."

"I would never tell you how to vote," he said. "I wouldn't even try. But I will tell you that God may want to talk to you about how you should vote."

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Thousands mourn Carnahan loss

By Shawn Hendricks

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Prayers and scripture rose up from the front steps of Missouri's Capitol as thousands gathered to remember Gov. Mel Carnahan. The governor died Oct. 16 in a plane crash with his son Randy and campaign aide Chris Sifford.

Carnahan, 66, a longtime member of First Baptist Church in Rolla, Mo., was remembered during the ceremony not only for his political accomplishments but also for his character, love for children and family values.

During the service, several colleagues and family members spoke about the man they respected and admired. The children's choir from First Baptist Church in Jefferson City sang "Jesus Loves Me."

The late governor's daughter, Robin, shared a few words about the man she knew simply as "Dad."

"My dad was a man of very few words," she said. "He was shy, really. At home, just as in public, he was quiet and kind and gentle. He never preached and lectured. He taught by example."

Missouri Supreme Court Justice Michael Wolff shared his thoughts on a man he described as a "straight arrow." "He could listen to discussions that were occasionally profane and vulgar, yet I don't recall hearing him utter an expletive that would need to be deleted," he said. "The public came to know him rarely for what he said but for what he did."

Former U.S. Sen. Thomas Eagleton described the governor as a dedicated servant of the public who focused more on a strong work ethic than on his position. "Mel never confused himself with the office and never succumbed to the arrogance that often accompanies power."

President Bill Clinton remembered Carnahan as a loyal friend who kept his priorities straight despite the ups and downs of political life. "He was a leader in the very best way," Clinton said. "Yes, he was a leader like Harry Truman. He spoke the plain truth and thought there was no greater calling than public service. You can deal with the rough and tumble if there is enough love, and they've done it with dignity, grace and generosity."

Gene Rooney, recently retired pastor of Jefferson City's First United Methodist Church, read several Scripture verses from the Old and New Testaments that Carnahan's wife, Jean, selected.

"Jean, and to your beloved family, may God's grace always be sufficient, even now, especially now, and may his word continue to give you strength to keep on keeping on," Rooney said.

Near the end of the service, the Carnahan family gathered at the casket of the governor and prayed together as thousands watched silently. Several soldiers then carried Carnahan's casket to a waiting caisson as a bagpiper played "Amazing Grace."

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-- Shawn Hendricks is a news writer for Word and Way

Melissa Rogers leaves BJC for Pew Charitable Trust forum

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington-based religious-liberty watchdog group, has announced she will leave the post at the end of October to begin work at a newly created think tank on religion and public life.

Melissa Rogers will become executive director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, a new venture being funded by Pew Charitable Trusts. It will convene a wide range of religious and public-policy leaders, academics, journalists and members of the public.

The co-conveners of the forum are Washington Post columnist E. J. Dionne of the Brookings Institution and Jean Bethke Elshtain of the University of Chicago.

Rogers, 34, joined the BJC staff in 1994 as associate general counsel. In 1999, she succeeded Brent Walker as general counsel after Walker was named the agency's executive director.

"I want to thank Baptist for the privilege of working with them to advance religious liberty," said Rogers. Rogers and her husband, Stan Fendley, have two children -- Adam, 4, and Carter, 18 months.

During her tenure as BJC general counsel, Rogers helped lead a diverse coalition of religious and civil liberties groups that steered through passage of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, a bill helping churches that face burdensome zoning regulations.

The measure, which also protects religious practices by people of faith living at state-run institutions, was signed into law by President Clinton Sept. 22.

"We worked very hard to unite an incredibly diverse group of people in Washington, and through the good will and hard work of these people, we've been able to accomplish important gains for religious liberty," Rogers said.

Walker applauded Rogers' service at the BJC, saying she has made an "invaluable contribution to the work of the BJC. We are sad to see Melissa go, but we send her off with our blessings."

He said that Rogers led an "often-contentious and unruly coalition with a steady hand and a gracious spirit." Passage of the religious land use law is a "lasting testimony to her effectiveness.

Walker added, "She will be very difficult to replace but we are determined to search for a first-rate church-state advocate to fill her shoes."

Rogers has become one of the nation's leading experts on "charitable choice" measures that provide tax funds for religious social services. She also helped lead the BJC's efforts to defeat a proposed constitutional amendment that would have altered church-state dynamics. It was offered by Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., and defeated in the House of Representatives in 1998.

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Commission says no single technology protects kids from online adult material

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- No single technology or method alone can protect children from graphic adult material on the Internet, according to a report released by a congressionally appointed commission.

Instead, it will require education, consumer empowerment, increased law enforcement and voluntary

industry action, the 18-member Commission on Child Online Protection said in a report released Oct. 20.

Several representatives from the Internet industry itself, including Yahoo!, PSINet and America Online, made up the commission. It also included representatives from the federal government, nonprofit and other organizations such as the National Law Center for Children and Families.

The report states that: "No single technology or method will effectively protect children from harmful material online. Rather, the commission determined that a combination of public education, consumer-empowerment technologies and methods, increased enforcement of existing laws, and industry action are needed to address this concern."

The American Civil Liberties Union applauded the report and called on Congress to "reject any attempt to pass mandatory blocking software legislation. Also showing support for the commission's findings were the National PTA, National Education Association and library organizations.

The commission approved the report unanimously, but three ex-officio members from the government could not vote. And unlike many commissions mandated by Congress, this one received no funds for its work.

A joint statement signed by the government representatives on the commission stated that children are shielded from commercial pornography in homes, schools, libraries, and even television rules limit programming containing indecent material to late evening hours. "Children are entitled to an analogous level of protection online," they stated.

"Often they do not have this," the three continued. "Innocent search requests turn up lurid descriptions of pornographic sites that can be accessed via a mouse-click. Unsolicited e-mail promotes this material. At best, these experiences are discomfoting and unwelcome."

Commission member William Schrader, CEO of PSINet, said that, "There is no single, one-size-fits-all, technological equivalent of a 'brown paper bag' in this new medium."

His company has joined in legal actions to overturn recent "harmful to minors" enactments by state legislatures across the country.

"I have found it instructive that none of the other plaintiffs can be considered purveyors of porn. Instead, they include sex educators, authors and publishers of controversial literary or artistic works, and AIDS activists," Schrader said.

"To suggest ... that these authors should be forced by law to segregate their work behind a credit card or age verification barrier, or label it as part of a new '.XXX' domain ... illustrates how troublesome it is to apply these measures to the exceptionally diverse range of lawful content that may be 'harmful to minors.'"

Other critics of new regulations pointed out the troublesome aspect of getting other countries to abide by the same rules, leaving laws ineffective since websites from different countries can be just as easily accessed over the web as ones from this country.

COPA Chairman Don Telage of Network Solutions said, "This report should serve as a blueprint for future action and is a first step in what we hope will be a continuing dialogue among Congress, the federal government, law enforcement and the Internet community."

Some of the commission's recommendations included:

-- Government and the private sector should undertake a major education campaign to promote public awareness of technologies and methods available to protect children online.

-- Government and industry should effectively promote acceptable-use policies, which refer to stated parameters for use of online systems. "Just as we provide children with firm rules for crossing the street and guidelines for dealing with a variety of unfamiliar situations, we need to provide them with rules and guidelines to facilitate their online learning experience as well as their safety," the report stated.

-- Resources should be allocated for the independent evaluation of child-protection technologies and to provide reports to the public about the capabilities of these technologies. The commission recommends that the private sector and public interest organizations provide support for an independent, non-governmental

testing facility for child protection technologies.

-- A conversation should begin among the broad, national, private sector on the development of next generation systems for labeling, rating and identifying content reflecting the convergence of old and new media.

-- Government at all levels should fund, with significant new money, aggressive programs to investigate, prosecute and report violations of federal and state obscenity laws, including efforts to that emphasize the protection of children from accessing materials illegal under current state and federal obscenity law.

-- State and federal law enforcement should make available a list, without images, of newsgroups, IP addresses, World Wide Web sites or other Internet sources that have been found to contain child pornography or where convictions have been obtained involving obscene material.

-- The online commercial adult industry should voluntarily take steps to restrict minors' ready access to adult content.

On the same day the report was released, news reports indicated the White House was moving to soften a congressional measure that would require schools and libraries to use filtering software to keep children from seeing adult-oriented Web sites.

The White House is pressing to let schools and libraries develop their own plans, but Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., said GOP House members are not going to water down his provision removing federal funds from any public school or library that do not install the software.

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Clinton signs bill with 'charitable choice,' supports old constitutional safeguards

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- President Clinton has signed a broad spending bill that includes a provision to provide tax funds for religious substance-abuse programs.

However, Clinton warned that the provision could be unconstitutional if certain safeguards are not met.

The Children's Health Act of 2000 re-authorizes programs of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. It includes the controversial "charitable choice" initiative, which is supported by a broad bipartisan group of lawmakers but is opposed by groups that support the separation of church and state.

In an Oct. 17 statement accompanying his signature of the legislation, Clinton highlighted the provision, which makes clear that religious organizations may qualify for federal grants "on the same basis as other nonprofit organizations."

But, he noted that the Department of Justice has advised "this provision would be unconstitutional to the extent that it were construed to permit governmental funding of organizations that do not or cannot separate their religious activities from their substance-abuse treatment and prevention activities."

Clinton said federal, state and local governments should take into account the structure and operations of religious organizations in deciding if they are constitutionally entitled to receive the funds.

Clinton's statement appears to signal a key alliance with opponents of "charitable choice," who charge that "pervasively sectarian" organizations like churches are ineligible for tax dollars because they cannot separate the religious from secular content in their programs.

But religiously affiliated groups like Catholic Charities are already eligible for the funds. The only reason charitable choice is needed, its opponents charge, is to make pervasively sectarian organizations eligible for the funds as well.

While not using the term pervasively sectarian, Clinton appears to construe the act to forbid funds from flowing to groups that cannot separate the religious aspects of their programs from the secular treatments designed to be supported with the program funds.

A spokesman for Americans United for Separation of Church and State said: "Our legal and legislative staff was delighted to see the president express this commitment in signing the statement. It represents the guarantee of safeguards for church-state separation if implemented properly."

Both leading presidential candidates have endorsed charitable choice as a way to address the nation's poverty and social ills.

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Mother, Baptist worker, tells students about daughter killed by drunk driver

By Susan Welch

BUIES CREEK, N.C. (ABP) -- A 7 year old with sparkling blue eyes who liked having her tummy rubbed before going to sleep is how Jan Cartledge describes her daughter, Bethany, who was killed by a drunk driver in 1994.

Cartledge, chairwoman of the youth conference planning team of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, brought a sobering message to students at Baptist-affiliated Campbell University. The Oct. 19 speech on the campus in Buies Creek, N.C., was part of National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week.

Cartledge used detail after detail to portray her daughter as a living child rather than a statistic.

"She was well behaved, a good athlete who liked to play T-ball, and had a lot of friends," Cartledge said. "I liked to run my fingers through her long, blonde hair. She had cute feet. She and her friend, Mollie, shared secrets of the heart."

Bethany's life was cut short on Jan. 18, 1994. A motorist, who had been drinking since he'd gotten off third shift that morning, crossed the center line and struck the passenger side of the vehicle containing Bethany and her father, who was seriously injured.

"From then on I have lived every parent's nightmare," Cartledge said. "I will miss each new birthday. I will miss hugging her, her first date, her marriage, her children, my grandchildren."

Cartledge said alcohol remains the leading factor in motor-vehicle deaths, and in the age group from 6 through 33, almost half of all vehicle accidents are alcohol related.

"Every choice and decision you make today has far-reaching consequences," Cartledge told students. "I hope that by hearing Bethany's story, you will think twice before you make the choice to drink alcohol."

Cartledge's husband and Bethany's father is Tony Cartledge, a former pastor and current editor of the Biblical Recorder, the journal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Jan Cartledge holds a bachelor's degree in social science from Appalachian State University and a master's from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

From 1992-1998 she was minister of education and youth at Woodhaven Baptist Church in Apex, NC, and has been a contract worker with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina since 1995.

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-- Susan Welch is a staff writer at Campbell University

Jewish scholars issue statement on Christians and Christianity

By Bob Allen

BALTIMORE (ABP) -- In response to improved relations between Christians and Jews, a group of Jewish scholars has issued a statement of common ground between the two faiths.

Among pronouncements, the document says that modern Christians are not to blame for the Nazi Holocaust, but it also says that Christians should respect Jewish beliefs and not attempt to convert Jews to Christianity.

A total of 180 Jewish leaders had signed "A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity" as of Sept. 20, according to the Institute of Jewish-Christian Relations in Baltimore, which sponsored a national scholar's project that drafted the document.

The statement describes "a dramatic and unprecedented shift" taking place in relations between the two faiths. It cited statements by Catholic and Protestant groups expressing remorse for the Holocaust and other mistreatment of Jews across history.

"We believe these changes merit a thoughtful Jewish response," the scholars say. "Speaking only for ourselves -- an interdenominational group of Jewish scholars -- we believe it is time for Jews to learn about the efforts of Christians to honor Judaism. We believe it is time for Jews to reflect on what Judaism may now say about Christianity. As a first step, we offer eight brief statements about how Jews and Christians may relate to one another."

1. "Jews and Christians worship the same God." Like Jews, Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the statement says. "While Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel."

2. "Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book." Jews call their Bible the "Tanakh," while Christians call it the "Old Testament." Christians and Jews interpret the Bible in different ways, the statement says, but "such differences must always be respected."

3. "Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel."

"Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics," the statement says. "As Jews, we applaud this support. We also recognize that Jewish tradition mandates justice for all non-Jews who reside in a Jewish state."

4. "Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of the Torah."

Both faiths accept the "inalienable sanctity and dignity of every human being" as expressed in the teaching that all are created in God's image. "This shared moral emphasis can be the basis of an improved relationship between our two communities. It can also be the basis of a powerful witness to all humanity for improving the lives of our fellow human beings and for standing against the immoralities and idolatries that harm and degrade us. Such witness is especially needed after the unprecedented horrors of the past century."

5. "Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon."

While Nazi ideology could not have taken place without a long history of Christian anti-Semitism and many Christians did not protest the Holocaust, others risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews, the statement says. "With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people. We applaud those Christians who reject this teaching of contempt, and we do not blame them for the sins committed by their ancestors."

6. "The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture."

Theological differences between the two faiths, such as Christians' faith in Jesus Christ and Jewish belief in the Torah, "will not be settled by one community insisting that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other; nor by exercising political power over the other," the statement says. "Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelation just as we expect Christians to respect our faithfulness to our revelation. Neither Jew nor Christian should be pressed into affirming the teaching of the other community."

7. "A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice."

"An improved relationship will not accelerate the cultural and religious assimilation that Jews rightly fear," the statement says. "It will not change traditional Jewish forms of worship, nor increase intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, nor persuade more Jews to convert to Christianity, nor create a false blending of Judaism and Christianity," the statement says.

"We respect Christianity as a faith that originated within Judaism and that still has significant contacts with it. We do not see it as an extension of Judaism. Only if we cherish our own traditions can we pursue this relationship with integrity."

8. "Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace."

Both faiths are guided by the Old Testament prophets' calls to "work to bring justice and peace to our world," the statement says.

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