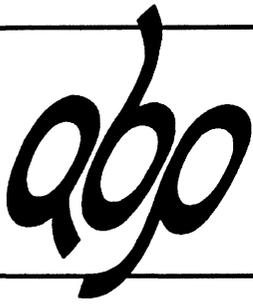


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Associated
Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626
Fax: 904.262.7745
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

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**'Anti-SBC' charge against Texas Baptists
not necessarily backed up by the numbers**

By Bob Allen

DALLAS (ABP) -- Even if Texas Baptists approve a controversial plan to reduce funding of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Texas will still be one of the denomination's largest contributors, pouring more than \$17.8 million into SBC missions and ministries next year.

Plans to cut \$5.4 million in funding to six seminaries and two agencies of the SBC, scheduled for vote Oct. 30-31 in Corpus Christi, have prompted critics to label Texas Baptists as uncooperative and even "anti-SBC."

Even with those cuts, however, Texas Baptists would continue next year to fund SBC home and international missions -- which together receive 73 cents out of every dollar given at the national level through the SBC's Cooperative Program unified budget -- at high levels.

Also, a comparison of giving patterns shows that even while Texas Baptists' top leaders propose altering the funding of SBC programs, their churches continue to give at least some money to the national body. Mega-churches associated with SBC leaders, meanwhile, put more of their budgets into local ministries and programs and often give proportionally less to denominational support.

Further, while the BGCT is currently the largest SBC-affiliated state group both numerically and in financial support, nearly half of Texans elected to denominational leadership posts last year came from churches affiliated with a much-smaller breakaway convention that pledges loyalty to the SBC's conservative leaders. That, Texas leaders complain, is akin to taxation without representation.

The new Texas funding plan calls for reducing \$5.3 million now sent to SBC seminaries to a cap of \$1 million and reinvesting those funds in three Texas Baptist schools. Another \$1.1 million trimmed from the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and Executive Committee, would go for Hispanic and human-welfare ministries in Texas and to Texas Baptists' own Christian Life Commission.

The proposed budget still would send about \$12 million to the SBC International Mission Board, \$5.6 million to the North American Mission Board, \$186,000 to the Annuity Board and \$59,000 to the SBC Historical Library and Archives.

Those figures total more than any state convention gave to the SBC in 1998-99 through the Cooperative Program unified budget except Texas and Georgia.

And while SBC leaders have attempted to paint the BGCT as being concerned with "Texas only," a look at giving patterns shows that Texas Baptist leaders continue to support at least some SBC programs, in some cases perhaps more sacrificially than churches associated with some of their SBC critics.

SBC president James Merritt's 11,000-member First Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga., gave \$210,000 to Georgia Baptists' Cooperative Program last year, according to records obtained from the Georgia Baptist Convention. That equaled 3.6 percent of undesignated receipts. In addition, the church gave \$25,000 to SBC missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and \$15,000 to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions. Another \$342,000 went to "other missions" that the church's associate pastor described as local ministries.

By comparison, BGCT president Clyde Glazener's church, Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth, averages about 250 in Sunday school but gave a higher percentage to denominational work. Gambrell Street gave \$57,125 to the Cooperative Program in 1999, according to figures requested from BGCT offices. That represented nearly 10 percent of the church's total receipts of just over \$582,000. Of that, \$38,684 funded BGCT ministries and \$18,440 to worldwide ministries.

Glazener said his church uses a giving option offered by the BGCT that divides its missions gifts 73 percent for the BGCT and 27 percent for four SBC entities -- the two mission boards, Southwestern Seminary and the Annuity Board -- and the Baptist World Alliance.

That option allows the church to avoid supporting some denominational entities it finds in disfavor, Glazener said. But it also means that a member of his church gives proportionally more of his or her offerings to SBC missions and to Southwestern Seminary than a comparable congregation using the traditional Cooperative Program.

On top of that, Glazener's church gave a reported \$9,550 to Lottie Moon and \$3,984 to Annie Armstrong in 1999 for direct funding of SBC missions. Glazener said the church takes an annual offering for foreign missions and unless funds are designated they go to Lottie Moon. About half of those who give designate their offering for the Global Missions Offering of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Glazener said.

In addition, Glazener said, the church sponsors five missions.

Merritt recently described himself as a "champion" for the Cooperative Program, but Snellville's denominational support was relatively low in years just prior to his election as SBC president. According to the report from the Georgia Baptist Convention, the church gave \$170,385 to the Cooperative Program in 1998, under 3 percent of undesignated gifts, and \$61,180 in 1997, or 1.25 percent of undesignated gifts. State convention records for 1997 and 1998 showed the church gave nothing to Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong or to a third offering for state missions.

Dan Greer, Snellville's associate pastor, said the church did not give to the missions offerings and gave a smaller-than-usual percentage through the Cooperative Program in 1997 and 1998 because of budget cuts related to a major building program.

This year, he said, the church has further increased its Cooperative Program giving to \$250,000, about 4 percent of a total budget of \$6.2 million, and contributed \$40,000 and \$20,000, respectively, to the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offerings.

The Snellville congregation spent another \$342,000 on local missions in 1999. Greer said projects sponsored by the church include a Spanish-speaking mission, a home for furloughing missionaries and prison, bus and television ministries.

Greer said the church has been systematically increasing its gifts to the Cooperative Program the last few years and would promote higher goals for its missions offerings this year.

"The last two years we have really become more supportive of missions across the board," he said.

Rudy Sanchez, pastor of First Mexican Baptist Church in Dallas, is current chairman of the BGCT's Executive Board, the group that is officially bringing the Texas funding recommendation.

Sanchez's small church gave \$11,950 to cooperative missions last year, according to BGCT records. Of that, \$9,026 went to BGCT and \$2,923 to worldwide ministries. The church gave \$796 to Lottie Moon and \$276 to Annie Armstrong. The amount of the church's total receipts was unavailable.

The chairman of the SBC Executive Committee is Claude Thomas, pastor of First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas. That church gave \$284,732 through the BGCT last year but designated 70 percent for the "worldwide" portion of the budget. Just \$84,649 went to the BGCT, while \$200,084 went to worldwide ministries. Those gifts totaled about 1.9 percent of total church receipts of \$14.5 million. The Euless church also gave \$64,930 to Lottie Moon and \$29,155 to Annie Armstrong.

When a former pastor at the Euless church, Jimmy Draper, was elected SBC president in 1982, the congregation was reportedly giving 11 percent of its receipts through the Cooperative Program.

BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade was pastor of First Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, before his election to the leadership post last year. The church gave a reported \$239,239 to the Cooperative Program in 1999, with \$156,575 going for the BGCT portion and \$82,663 worldwide. The church gave \$75,947 to Lottie Moon and \$19,097 to Annie Armstrong.

Cheryl Durham, director of accounting services at the Arlington church, said 6.5 percent of every undesignated dollar is given to cooperative missions, with 67 cents going to the BGCT. Church members choose from three options about how the worldwide portions of their gifts are disbursed. One plan funds the SBC, another the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and partner organizations and the third funds both SBC and CBF efforts.

Before his election eight years ago as president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee, Morris Chapman was pastor of First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Texas. In 1999, the church gave \$249,352 in Cooperative Program support, or 5.5 percent of total receipts. The church gave \$180,748 to BGCT items and \$68,603 for worldwide causes. Gifts to Lottie Moon were \$34,138 and to Annie Armstrong \$10,013.

Texas churches are allowed to choose among various options for how their worldwide offerings are distributed. Some plans fund SBC programs at various levels and some do not. The BGCT, however, has a policy of not reporting which plan a church uses.

SBC leaders have also accused the BGCT of breaching a 75-year-old agreement that state conventions would not determine division of funds by the SBC and vice-versa.

Texas Baptist leaders respond that cooperation works both ways and complain that moderates have been shut out of any meaningful leadership in the SBC for more than a decade.

At this year's Southern Baptist Convention, seven of 15 Texans elected to SBC boards of trustees were from churches affiliated with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, a two-year-old conservative breakaway group. That is despite the fact that the 2.7 million-member BGCT gave 36 times as much to the SBC as the 400-church SBTC. The BGCT ranked first in Cooperative Program gifts to the SBC in 1998-99, with \$22.4 million. The SBTC ranked 25th, contributing more than \$610,000.

New Mexico Baptists make Bible, CP support membership standards

By John Loudat

GALLUP, N.M. (ABP) -- Churches won't necessarily need to agree with the Southern Baptist Convention on what the Bible means to remain in fellowship with the Baptist Convention of New Mexico, but they must support the national denomination financially.

New Mexico Baptists meeting in annual session Oct. 23-25 in Gallup approved a bylaw change making fidelity to the Bible and support for the Cooperative Program unified budget the criteria for membership in the state group.

The change, recommended by the state convention's executive board, passed overwhelmingly but not without considerable discussion and failed parliamentary attempts to amend and table the motion.

The bylaw change came in response to a motion last year directing a study of making the "Baptist Faith and Message" the doctrinal criteria for seating messengers from churches at the state convention.

Opponents to that suggestion, however, said controversial changes to the faith statement, particularly an amendment two years ago dictating that wives should submit to their husbands, would disqualify some churches that otherwise have no problems with the BCNM.

A credentials study committee brought the following recommendation, which previously gained executive board approval in July:

"As an autonomous Baptist group, the convention reserves the right to determine what constitutes a cooperating Baptist church. Churches shall be considered in friendly cooperation who are sympathetic with the purpose and work of this convention, having demonstrated cooperation by contributing a minimum of \$250 to the Cooperative Program through the BCNM during the fiscal year preceding the annual or special meeting of the convention. The faith and practices of each cooperating church, in the opinion of the convention in session, shall not be in conflict with Scripture. The convention in session shall be the final judge of the qualifications of its members."

Since its inception in 1925, the Cooperative Program has been Southern Baptist's primary method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of both state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of CP contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the SBC Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The BCNM retains 69.5 percent of CP gifts and forwards the remaining 30.5 to the SBC.

One concern raised during the debate was that some churches might not be able to afford to give \$250. A messenger responded, however, that even in a poor church there would likely be someone who could afford the minimum contribution.

Tom Dowler of Los Alamos proposed an amendment to the motion that the financial requirement be changed to read that the church be a "bona fide contributor to the work of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico" during the preceding fiscal year. He explained that such a change in the wording would include churches that contribute to their local association and the BCNM but to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship instead of the SBC.

Roswell pastor Don Hayhurst, who served on the credentials study committee, responded that churches eligible to seat messengers could be dually aligned with the CBF and SBC. He said the committee's intent was to "take the middle ground" and promote "harmony."

Hayhurst further explained that the requirement that the faith and practice of cooperating churches not be in conflict with Scripture was made because everything in the "Baptist Faith and Message" is in Scripture, but not everything in Scripture is in the "Baptist Faith and Message."

Dowler's amendment failed with less than a dozen of the 230 messengers registered at the time voting in favor of it,

Jeff Johnson, pastor of Central Baptist Church in Grants, then moved that the recommendation be tabled and sent back to the committee with instructions to make it more in line with the SBC requirements.

The SBC constitution's article on membership says that churches that are "bona fide contributors" to the work of the convention are entitled to one messenger and allows additional messengers for each \$250 contributed to SBC causes or 250 members.

Johnson said such a change would remove the problem of seating messengers from churches that were struggling financially.

During the discussion, Albuquerque pastor Bob Butler noted that while the SBC procedure is informative, "we are an autonomous body."

Johnson's motion also was soundly defeated and the original proposal passed with less than a dozen votes of opposition the next morning.

A credentials committee met briefly after the motion was approved to consider seating messengers from churches that had not met the \$250 requirement. BCNM first vice president Clark Henderson of Albuquerque, who was presiding at the time and also chaired the credentials committee, announced to messengers that committee members had taken care of the \$250 and the credentials of the messengers in question were approved.

Messengers also approved a BCNM budget for 2001, the largest in the state convention's history.

The budget will require \$3,260,168 in CP receipts from the churches next year, an increase of \$115,165, or 3.66 percent, over the amount called for in the 2000 budget.

After the exception of \$80,300 in preferred items (ministers' retirement and retirees' insurance) is applied, 30.5 percent of the Cooperative Program receipts, an estimated \$969,860, will be forwarded to the SBC for national and international missions and ministry. No increase in the percentage was proposed for next year.

The remaining 69.5 percent, \$2,210,008, along with additional income of \$1,084,094 from various sources -- Baptist New Mexican subscriptions and advertising, Baptist Building rental income, and the SBC's North American Mission Board and LifeWay Christian Resources -- will be used to support a total operating budget of \$3,294,102 for mission work in New Mexico.

Raises for convention personnel of 3 percent were included in the budget. The convention also will increase by 1 percent matching annuity contributions for employees who wish to make additional voluntary contributions to their retirement plan, not to exceed 4 percent of their salary.

The three resolutions approved by messengers resolved that New Mexico Baptists "gratefully acknowledge God for the rain he has blessed our state with this week," express "strong opposition" to gambling and gambling-related legislation, and express their gratitude and thanks to the people of Gallup and its Baptist churches "for their love, generosity, hospitality and Christian fellowship."

Elected during the meeting was a new slate of convention officers: Bob Butler, pastor of Sandia Baptist Church, Albuquerque, president; Keeney Dickenson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Eunice, first vice president; and Fred McDonald, pastor of Monterey Baptist Church, Albuquerque, second vice president.

Other nominees for president were Dickenson and Jay McCollum, pastor of First Baptist Church, Gallup, who would later be nominated for second vice president. Butler won a runoff vote with Dickenson.

Also nominated for first vice president were McDonald and Shon Wagner, pastor of First Baptist Church, Truth or Consequences. Dickenson and McDonald were involved in a runoff.

Next year's annual meeting will be held at First Baptist Church, Hobbs, Oct. 30-31.

Anti-gambling organizer predicts victory in 5 states

By Jim Newton

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (ABP) -- An anti-gambling activist is predicting that voters in five out of six states where gaming issues are on the ballot Nov. 7 will reject the expansion of legalized gambling.

Although the votes will be close, "we are convinced we hold a winning hand in at least five of these six states," said Tom Grey, a United Methodist and an anti-gambling organizer from Rockford, Ill.

Voters will face ballot issues to repeal video-lottery gambling in South Dakota and greyhound dog-track racing in Massachusetts, as well as proposals to expand legalized gambling in Arkansas, Colorado, Maine and South Carolina.

"Because of the significance and impact of these six ballot issues, we are issuing a clarion call to concerned citizens to go to the polls in record numbers on Nov. 7 and soundly defeat the expansion of gambling in America," said Grey, director of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, at the nonprofit group's recent annual meeting.

Grey urged concerned Christians of all denominations to vote against the expansion of legalized gambling in America. "What happens in the next 25 days will impact not just these six states, but the entire nation," he declared. "We believe the voters of America will declare enough is enough!"

He predicted victory in five states for two reasons: the American people are becoming informed on the issue, and the "the pain of many far outweighs the profit of a few."

The pain of addiction, bankruptcy, crime and corruption are not worth the profits that go to the gambling industry and to the few people who actually beat the odds, he said.

The findings of a two-year investigation into gambling's impact on American society, released by the National Gambling Impact Study Commission in June 1999, is enabling people to make informed decisions. Grey also cited specific study recommendations that support the defeat of legalized gambling in each state.

Grey urged South Dakota voters, who will decide on a constitutional amendment that would abolish video-lottery games, to follow the commission's advice. States with video lotteries are urged to "cease and roll back existing operations" because convenience gambling "provides fewer economic benefits and creates potentially greater social costs by making gambling more available and accessible," the commission said.

States also should recognize that lotteries and non-casino electronic gambling devices "do not create a concentration of good quality jobs and do not generate significant economic development," the commission said in its recommendations.

Massachusetts voters will decide on a proposal for a total ban on greyhound racing in the state by next June. Grey said the owners of the greyhound tracks are losing money, and they want to add video poker at the racetracks. The National Gambling Impact Study Commission, however, specifically recommends against adding casino-style gambling at pari-mutuel facilities that are not making a profit.

Arkansas will vote on legalizing casinos in six counties, a state lottery and charitable gambling. No comprehensive gambling impact analysis has been done in Arkansas to study the economic, social and regional effects as recommended by the commission, Grey said. Also, no private citizen oversight board has been created in Arkansas to oversee legalized gambling and the lottery as recommended by the commission.

Maine voters will decide if they want to allow a minimum of 1,500 video-lottery machines at Scarborough Downs Race Track. Grey said he believes the voters in Maine will follow the commission's recommendations, which urge states to refuse to allow casino-type gambling at pari-mutuel facilities.

Colorado will vote on approving a multistate lottery, such as Powerball, with at least 20 other states. Grey conceded that Colorado is the one state without an organized coalition working against this proposal.

"Our experience is that without organized citizen resistance, the state might slip further into gambling addiction," he said.

Grey also remarked that the vote on creating a state lottery in South Carolina is too close to call.

The commission recommended that states curtail the growth of new lottery games because they "contribute disproportionately to the culture of casual gambling in the United States."

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Bush stacks up better than Gore on key issues SBC leader suggests

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following story ran in Tuesday's ABP under a different headline.

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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News briefs from Associated Baptist Press

Gardner-Webb offering courses for church leaders

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. (ABP) -- Gardner-Webb University's M. Christopher White School of Divinity will begin a Lay Institute of Religion this fall as an outreach to churches.

The new program will offer classes in New Testament, Old Testament and Spirituality. The classes, taught by faculty of the divinity school in Boiling Springs, N.C., are geared toward laity and clergy.

"Our purpose is to offer educational and enrichment opportunities for both laity and clergy who are not enrolled as degree-seeking students in the School of Divinity," said Charles Horton, coordinator of Gardner-Webb's Center for Congregational Enrichment.

Associate exec being nominated to lead Texas WMU

DALLAS (ABP) -- Woman's Missionary Union of Texas will vote Oct. 30 on a new executive director.

Carolyn Porterfield, who has worked eight years as the group's associate executive director, is being nominated to fill a vacancy after current leader Joy Fenner retires next March.

Porterfield, 47, is a native of Colorado and graduate of Wayland Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. If elected, she would named executive-director-treasurer-elect effective Nov. 9.

Historic Nashville church ordains woman

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- The 180-year-old First Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., has for the first time ordained a woman to the gospel ministry.

She is Ryan Leigh Chambers, a graduate of Belmont University and Harvard Divinity School who is in training as a chaplain at the Department of Veteran Affairs Medical Center in Nashville.

Southern Baptist women back where they started, author says

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Southern Baptist women in ministry have come full circle in the last century, according to a new book written by a professor at Baylor University.

Women in 1907 were encouraged to study at the Woman's Missionary Union Training School in Louisville, Ky., but were excluded from certain vocations, like preaching, says Laine Scales, author of "All That Fits a Woman: Training Southern Baptist Women for Charity and Missions, 1907-1926."

Scales, who attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the 1980s, says women were preparing for all sorts of Christian ministries, including preaching. Today, under more conservative leadership, the seminary permits women to enroll in master-of-divinity programs but discourages them from seeking pastoral roles.

Scales, assistant professor of social work at Baylor, says the fear today is the same as in 1907 -- that women will preach and serve as leaders of men.

"Many women inclined toward ministry are baffled that even in the 21st century, Southern Baptists open the seminary classroom to women yet do not encourage the denomination's sisters to enter all forms of Christian ministry," she said. "While Christian women of other denominations have been able to move into these areas of service, Southern Baptist women continue to find change very slow in their denomination."

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