



Associated Baptist Press

Editor: **Bob Allen**
Executive editor: **Greg Warner**

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

February 13, 2002

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Nashville, Tennessee

(02-13)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Missionaries not being forced to sign creed, Rankin says**
- Compromise faith-based measure still raises questions for critics**
- Former Illinois exec Wiley joins NC convention staff**

MAR 01 2002

Missionaries not being forced to sign creed, Rankin says

By Bob Allen

ALBUQUERQUE (ABP) -- International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin denies that Southern Baptist missionaries are being forced to sign a creed in order to continue to serve.

Speaking to editors of Baptist state newspapers Feb. 12 in Albuquerque, Rankin said it hasn't been decided whether international missionaries that refuse his request to affirm the 2000 "Baptist Faith and Message" will be asked to resign.

Rankin defended the action against criticism that it for the first time imposes a creed on missionary personnel. "We're not imposing a creed on anyone," Rankin said. However, he added, "Our missionaries should be doctrinally accountable to those that send them out."

Still, he said, the action doesn't represent a major departure, noting that missionary candidates have been required to generally agree with the "Baptist Faith and Message" since 1970.

"We're just asking them to affirm what they already affirm," he said.

Rankin said some have presumed that missionaries who refuse his request would be fired. He called that "pure speculation."

Missionaries that express disagreement with the doctrinal statement will meet with field supervisors for counseling, Rankin said. In those sessions, he said, administrators will seek to convince any with problems why it is "beneficial" for them to comply.

He said missionaries that don't personally agree with the way the document interprets the Bible on topics such as women's roles, for example, should acknowledge that is the way most churches interpret Scripture and must conduct themselves accordingly.

He said he would find it "untenable," however, that any missionary would feel the need to sign the document against his or her conscience in order to continue to serve.

Rankin emphasized the letter to missionaries was a "request" from the president and not a policy change. Rankin said he believed it would have been inappropriate for such a directive to come from the board of trustees.

Since the 2000 revision of the "Baptist Faith and Message," he said 1,500 new missionaries that have come through the appointment process have been asked to affirm the statement with virtually no problems.

-30-

Compromise faith-based measure still raises questions for critics

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Leaders in Washington have announced a compromise aimed at lessening controversy over President Bush's "faith-based initiative," which passed last year in the House of Representatives but stalled in the Senate.

President Bush said Feb. 7 he would support a faith-based bill sponsored by Sens. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Rick Santorum (R-Pa.)

The bill, named the CARE (Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment) Act of 2001, encourages partnerships between the federal government and religious and other private agencies to provide social services. It also encourages charitable giving by making it easier for most taxpayers to deduct gifts to religious and other charitable causes.

The Senate bill omits two widely criticized portions of the House version, however.

One sought to expand "charitable choice" programs that provide funds to pervasively sectarian religious organizations that perform social services. Groups that support the separation of church and state objected to the use of government funds to help religious groups to proselytize.

The other exempted religious organizations from anti-discrimination standards. Civil-liberties groups said government funds should not be used to discriminate.

Instead, the Senate bill says religious providers cannot be compelled to remove religious art from their walls, change religious provisions or language in their founding documents or drop religious requirements for members of governing boards in order to qualify for government funding.

"This legislation will not only provide a way for government to encourage faith-based programs to exist without breaching the separation of church and state," Bush said, "it will also encourage charitable giving as well."

The Baptist Joint Committee -- an early opponent of the House version of the legislation -- called the bill a "U-turn" from previous faith-based legislation, but worried the administration might see it as a way to pursue charitable choice "through the back door."

Barry Lynn of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State said the Senate proposal still "gives special treatment to religious groups" that is not given to secular social-service providers.

Lieberman said in a White House press conference announcing the president's support of his bill said it creates what Bush has referred to as "a level playing field" by protecting the religious character of charities. "This says that if you qualify otherwise, you can't be discriminated against in applying for a grant to do social-service work if you have a cross on the wall or a mezuzah on the floor, or if you praise God in your mission statement."

If the bill passes the Senate, it will be sent to a joint House-Senate conference committee that will hammer out differences between the two versions. Further controversy could result from that process. Rep. J.C. Watts (R-Okla.) -- a co-sponsor of the original House bill -- called the agreement on the Senate version "a good start" but said he hopes the two houses of Congress "can work out our differences" on the legislation.

The Senate bill contains other provisions that supporters say would aid the work of religious charities. Besides making it easier for most taxpayers to deduct charitable giving, the bill also would make it simpler for

churches and other pervasively religious groups to form separate non-profit corporations that would be eligible for government social-service funds. It also would streamline the process for applying for government grants for such groups.

-30-

Former Illinois exec Wiley joins NC convention staff

By Steve DeVane

ASHEBORO - Robert E. (Bob) Wiley, who resigned last fall after five years as executive director of the Illinois Baptist State Association, will join the Baptist State Convention (BSC) General Board staff as senior consultant for church planting for the eastern region of North Carolina.

Wiley's appointment was approved by the General Board's Executive Committee on Jan. 29.

Prior to his tenure as the Illinois convention's top executive, Wiley was director of the associational missions division for the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board) from 1986-96. He worked as a director of missions and served in other positions with the Home Mission Board (HMB) from 1976-86.

Wiley told the Executive Committee he learned the importance of church planting from his parents. His father, a pastor, helped to start 63 churches in the Midwest. "My mother used to say, 'when they get robes for the choir, it's time to start another church,'" Wiley said. He later told the General Board, "I believe the most effective method of reaching people who are not in church today is to start a new work that they will attend."

Milton Hollifield, executive team leader for the Mission Growth Evangelism Team, said Illinois Baptists started more than 200 new churches during Wiley's five-year tenure, and that he "continues to think creatively and plan strategically in assisting pastors and directors of missions."

Executive Director-treasurer Jim Royston noted that one of his goals is for the BSC to have a net gain of 150 new, healthy, reproducing churches by 2006. He praised the appointment of Wiley, who joins Nelson Tilton, another former HMB employee with long experience in new church starts.

Wiley moves into a position that was vacated by Lynn Sasser, who will become senior consultant for associational development and regional resources. Along with the change in leadership, the position also will be moved from the BSC's Strategic Initiatives and Planning Team, to relate directly to Royston in the administrative group.

Stafford will continue to work part time for the BSC, on a contract basis, as cooperative program giving promotion coordinator.

-30-

END
