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**Baylor report determines evidence
'insufficient' to remove McFarland**

By Marv Knox

WACO, Texas (ABP) – A Baylor University investigation has determined "insufficient evidence" exists to remove Jaclanel McFarland from the university's board of regents.

A special investigative committee delivered that report to Baylor's regents July 16, ending two months of speculation whether McFarland, a Houston attorney, would become the first board member to be impeached in the school's 158-year history.

McFarland had been accused of telling students about an undercover drug sting on campus. She vehemently denied the accusation.

Baylor administrators reportedly believed she leaked word of the drug operation, which centered around a 22-year-old undercover agent who lived in a university dorm and pledged Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity during the 2002-03 school year. Her son Allen had been a member of the fraternity, although he was not enrolled in Baylor at the time.

The sting ended April 19 with seven arrests involving six students. Only two of the arrests resulted in felony charges – a small haul, considering the operation's scope and expense.

During their May meeting, the regents created the investigative committee to look into charges against McFarland. Nine weeks later, the committee reported "reasonable cause" existed to investigate the charges initially.

However, "the investigative committee determined to end the investigation with no further action," the regents reported in a press release distributed shortly after the 90-minute closed-door session ended. "The committee's conclusion ... that there was insufficient evidence resulted in the board's closing the matter by taking no further action against Regent Jaclanel McFarland."

Speaking to reporters a few minutes later, McFarland expressed relief at the investigative committee's findings. Then she resumed the activity that, she has maintained, got her in trouble in the first place – criticism of Baylor President Robert Sloan.

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"I'm pleased and relieved and look forward to continuing my service to Baylor University as a member of the board of regents," she said, reading from a prepared statement. "As you know, the regents have some very important work ahead, and I look forward to being part of that effort."

"I will remain vigilant in my effort to do all I can to ensure that Baylor University remains one of the finest universities in the country. For now, my biggest concern is with the direction the university has taken under Robert Sloan's leadership."

Shortly after the investigation of McFarland was launched, she and some supporters suggested it was an attempt to remove her from the board of regents because of her criticism of Sloan. Sloan would not respond to that charge, citing the rules of confidentiality that governed the process.

McFarland has been one of the most vocal critics of Sloan's implementation of Baylor 2012, the university's 10-year strategy plan.

Baylor 2012 calls for the university to become a "tier one" school, meaning it would be ranked by U.S. News & World Report magazine as one of the nation's 50 best universities. Among key changes incurred by the strategy are shifting the faculty from a primary emphasis on teaching to an emphasis on research and teaching, significant expansion of campus facilities that has incurred record debt, and sharp increases in student tuition.

"There are a lot of good initiatives in 2012, but I believe the way it's being implemented at this time is not in the best interest of Baylor," McFarland said during an impromptu news conference.

"I am most concerned with the disgruntlement and the distrust that the faculty has of the administration," she said. She cited a recent faculty survey that revealed many faculty members, particularly long-term tenured professors, do not trust Sloan and his administration.

"I'm also very concerned about the students," she added. "I'm concerned about the tuition and the debt level the students will have to incur to study under these faculty members. ... "I think we have a leadership crisis at Baylor, and it will be up to the board of regents to decide how to handle it," she said, adding, "I don't speak for the board; I speak only for myself."

Asked if the investigation stemmed from an "honest mistake" or was a personal attack on her, McFarland said: "At this time, I'm not sure. We'll just have to investigate further."

McFarland declined to rule out the possibility of a defamation or libel lawsuit in the wake of the investigation and nationwide publicity that has ensued. "Those decisions haven't been made yet," she said. "We're still considering our options."

McFarland serves on the board in a slot appointed by the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Her current three-year term expires June 1, 2004, and she can be nominated for another three-year term. Messengers to the BGCT annual session in November will consider board nominees. "If they elect me, I'll serve," she said.

That could mean three more years of conflict with Sloan. But the Baylor president predicted the two will get along.

Sloan said his relationship with McFarland – who was one of his strongest supporters when he was elected president in 1995 – has "historically been very good, [but] it's obviously been difficult lately."

"I can understand any frustration on her part," he added. "The investigative committee affirmed that I did the things I should do. I was not involved in the investigation. I handed it over to the regents. Ms. McFarland and I have already spoken to each other. I have affirmed my commitment to work with her. She is a member in good standing on the board of regents."

Asked specifically if the two can work together, Sloan said: "I know I can, and I think she can. I think Jaclanel is a person who is very flexible, very intelligent, very adaptive, and I look forward to working with her. I believe we can do that."

Sloan acknowledged the episode has brought some criticism upon himself and his presidency. "You know, in a

job like this, you're always going to face criticism," he said. "And frankly, I'm glad that Baylor is moving forward in such a way that Baylor has something to talk about. You have the opportunity to tell your story. You have the opportunity to present the things you are doing when people are interested."

"People love Baylor University. And the fact that people are concerned, the fact that people ask questions, reflects on how much they love the university."

Despite the scrutiny caused by the McFarland investigation and criticism of Baylor 2012, Sloan asserted his future as president is not in jeopardy.

The closed session of the regents' meeting did not include a call for his termination or resignation, he said, a fact confirmed by several regents.

"My future is in God's hands," Sloan said. "I feel very confident about the support of the regents. I feel confident about the regents' support of the 10-year vision of the university. I'm confident, frankly, about the support of Baylor alumni for the 10-year vision. ... I hear it every day. I receive e-mails and letters and phone calls on a daily basis of very strong support."

In time, the regents and the Baylor community will resolve the rift created by the investigation, he predicted.

"When you have a 36-member board, and when you have a dynamic university, and when you have intelligent, dynamic people like the leaders on our board, there should be some disagreement, because we want them to ask questions. ... But you'll see people working together in a very positive way in terms of their personal relationships."

Sloan pledged to improve the situation by improving his communication skills.

"The [faculty] survey showed we need to do ... a better job of communicating with the tenured faculty," he said. "Any decent human being who is a leader ought to admit that there are things you can do better. I need to do a better job of making sure that all of our faculty know they are loved and appreciated and have tremendous contributions to make at Baylor University."

Board chair Drayton McLane, like several other regents, declined to discuss the details of the McFarland investigation and regents' response to the committee's report. However, he affirmed Sloan and said improved communication will be the key to an improved climate at Baylor. He agreed with Sloan's prediction that the regents can move beyond the investigation in unity.

In fact, most of the regents' July 16-18 meeting was committed to discussing the intricacies of Baylor 2012 with administrators responsible for every phase of the strategy, said McLane a Temple businessman. He said administrators and regents next must communicate clearly the implications of the 10-year vision with all the school's constituencies.

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British leader Blair tells Congress Iraq war, ideals of liberty justified

By Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- America's closest ally in the Iraq war told Congress that he still believes -- with "every fiber of instinct and conviction" -- that the war against Iraq was justified because of the threat posed by the specter of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a rogue regime.

The assertion comes amid mounting criticism at home and abroad that questionable intelligence formed the cornerstone of President Bush's argument for invading Iraq.

"The risk is that terrorism and states developing weapons of mass destruction come together," British Prime Minister Tony Blair said in a July 17 address to a joint session of Congress in the House chamber. Blair is the

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CORRECTION:

There is an error in the July 17 ABP story, "British leader Blair tells Congress Iraq war, ideals of liberty justified." Due to an editing mistake, the fifth and sixth paragraphs created a misleading implication about a comment Blair made. They should be replaced with the following paragraph:

The enthusiastic reception Blair received from Congress was in stark contrast to the criticism he has been receiving in Great Britain. He has been subject to intense criticism over the war, especially recent revelations that he and Bush relied on questionable intelligence about Iraq's nuclear capabilities in building their case for war. When members of Congress applauded wildly for Blair, he quipped, "That's more than I deserve, and more than I'm used to, quite frankly." Lawmakers responded with laughter and more applause.

fourth British head of state to address Congress. The last was Margaret Thatcher in 1985.

The United Kingdom was the United States' chief ally in Iraq, providing thousands of combat troops and diplomatic support for forcible ouster of Saddam Hussein's regime. Blair's support for the war, however, has cost him considerable political support at home and in the rest of Europe, where the war was unpopular.

The criticism of Blair in the England focuses on recent revelations that Bush and Blair, in building their case for war, relied on shoddy intelligence about Iraq's nuclear capabilities,

Of the criticism, Blair told members of Congress, "That's more than I deserve, and more than I'm used to, quite frankly."

"Can we be sure that terrorism and weapons of mass destruction will join together?" he asked. "Let us say one thing, if we are wrong, we will have destroyed a threat that, at its least, is responsible for inhuman carnage and suffering. That is something I am confident history will forgive."

"But," he continued, "if our critics are wrong ... and we do not act, then we will have hesitated in the face of this menace when we should have given leadership. That is something history will not forgive."

Blair emphasized the best way to fight terrorism is to support the ideals of liberty and justice. Promoting those ideals do not equate to cultural imperialism, he added. "Ours are not Western values. They are the universal values of the human spirit," he said to thunderous applause from members of Congress and observers.

Blair also criticized the "anti-Americanism that sometimes passes for political discourse" in Europe. He said many nations in Western Europe must give that up in order to partner with the United States in fighting terrorism and spreading democracy and justice around the globe.

However, Blair also urged the United States to demonstrate to Europe "that this is a partnership based on persuasion, not command" -- a comment that drew applause from Democrats.

Many European countries as well as domestic critics have charged the Bush administration with exercising a unilateral, cowboy-style foreign policy, especially in its attempts to justify war on Iraq.

Blair also urged the U.S. to do its utmost to work with other nations in promoting peace and security in post-war Iraq, as well as post-war Afghanistan. So far, the Bush administration has refused to work with the United Nations to provide peacekeepers for both nations.

After his speech, Blair met with Bush. He received the Congressional Gold Medal for his support for the U.S. war on terrorism and the war in Iraq.

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Bush touts 'faith-based' plan to blacks, but Congressional Black Caucus balks

By Hannah Lodwick and Robert Marus

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- As President Bush touted his "faith-based initiatives" to a group of mostly African-American urban leaders July 16, a group of Congressional Democrats and leaders in the Congressional Black Caucus were denouncing part of his plan as discriminatory.

Bush gave a short speech to a group of about 100 inner-city pastors and leaders of urban faith-based charities who had gathered in Washington to meet with White House officials. He also used the opportunity to link his faith-based plan with needs in Africa, from where he has recently returned.

"We ought not to fear faith," Bush said. "We ought not to discriminate against faith-based programs."

But that same afternoon, in a press conference at the Capitol, Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), chairman of the

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Congressional Black Caucus, and other Democratic legislators took issue with a Republican bill reauthorizing the Head Start early-childhood education program. In particular, they opposed a provision in the bill that would allow pervasively religious pre-school programs to receive federal Head Start funding while maintaining their right to discriminate in employment decisions on the basis of religious beliefs.

"We can't afford to let our children down," Cummings said, pointing to six young children from a local Head Start program who came to the press conference.

The issue of employment discrimination with federal dollars has bubbled up in several legislative settings in recent months. The Bush administration recently announced that its official position is that thoroughly religious organizations receiving government grants for social services should retain the same exemptions to employment-discrimination laws as religious groups that do not accept federal dollars. Republican leaders in the House have attached such provisions to several federal spending bills

Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, said one of the problems faced by opponents of such employment discrimination is that people simply can't believe it is an issue. "The public, they just don't think this is possible in 2003, that this is actually being proposed," Scott told reporters.

Leaders of the Republican-controlled House have repeatedly disallowed floor votes on amendments offered by Democrats that would remove the employment-discrimination provisions from the spending bills.

The bills are often those that re-authorize funding for popular entitlement programs - meaning even if legislators object to the employment-discrimination portion of the bills, they are still reluctant to vote against the whole package. Doing so could become a major political liability in an election year.

The faith-based program -- an attempt to expand the government's ability to fund social services through religious providers, including churches and mosques -- has been the centerpiece of Bush's domestic policy.

Bush's attempts to push the program through Congress have faced stiff opposition, especially in the Senate. The opposition has focused on the employment-discrimination issue as well as the larger question of whether providing federal grants directly to churches and other religious organizations violates the Constitution.

Critics say, now that Bush has failed to get a full-blown version of the faith-based legislation passed, he and his congressional allies now are attempting to accomplish the same thing in a piecemeal pattern using the spending bills.

Bush regularly uses the language of non-discrimination to describe the faith-based initiative, insisting the government should provide funds to religious social-service providers on an equal basis with secular providers. However, as Bush and other White House officials have repeatedly insisted, equal footing also means that the receipt of government funding should "never cause the faith-based program to lose its character or to compromise [its] mission."

The White House and its conservative allies in Congress have said requiring religious organizations to hire people of any faith in order to receive government funds would be asking those organizations to compromise their mission.

"We ought to ask the question in our society, 'Is the faith-based program working,' not focus on the fact that it's a faith-based program," Bush said, to applause from the audience.

"We believe freedom is God's gift to every individual," Bush said. "In this land of plenty, there are people who hurt. I believe the American dream is meant for everybody. Where we find doubt, we have to bring light and hope."

Meanwhile, Scott objected to Bush's use of an anti-discrimination argument to push for federally funded job discrimination. "When you talk about employment discrimination, I have never heard the term 'civil right' applied to the employer doing the discriminating," Scott said.

In addition to discussing faith-based initiatives, Bush reviewed his recent trip to Africa, focusing on the continent's HIV/AIDS epidemic and hunger problems. He said the United States has a responsibility to help nations overcome disease, starvation and civil war.

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Linking the faith-based initiative with aid to African nations, Bush noted the Catholic Church in Uganda has the necessary infrastructure to distribute AIDS-inhibiting anti-retroviral drugs to those living with the disease. The United States could channel some of its aid through the church, he suggested.

Several prominent African-American religious leaders – including Dallas pastor Tony Evans and G.E. Patterson, presiding bishop of the Memphis-based Church of God in Christ – flanked Bush while he addressed the crowd of invitees, which frequently applauded his remarks. One man called out "Mr. President, four more years," as Bush left the room.

Earlier the Congressional Black Caucus rejected Bush's request for a meeting to discuss his Africa trip. In a letter to Bush, Cummings, the group's chairman, noted the organization "has requested a meeting with the President for over two-and-a-half years and unfortunately each time he has refused." Bush declined to meet with the group before his trip.

The Head Start reauthorization bill, also known as the "School Readiness Act of 2003," likely will come to the House floor on July 18.

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Robertson launches 'prayer offensive' to remove ill Supreme Court justices

By Hannah Lodwick

WASHINGTON (ABP) – Religious Right leader Pat Robertson has launched a 21-day "prayer offensive" to persuade the Supreme Court's oldest or most infirm justices to retire so that a more conservative court can emerge.

The TV preacher recently e-mailed an "urgent call for prayer" to viewers of his CBN network, asking them to pray that several justices will retire.

"One justice is 83 years old, another has cancer and another has a heart condition," said the letter on the CBN website. "Would it not be possible for God to put it in the minds of these three judges that the time has come to retire?"

While the identity of the judge with a heart condition is uncertain, Robertson apparently meant Justice John Paul Stevens, 83, and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who had colon cancer surgery in 1999.

"With their retirement and the appointment of conservative judges, a massive change in federal jurisprudence can take place," Robertson said in the letter announcing "Operation Supreme Court Freedom."

Critics of Robertson's letter responded with dismay.

"There is something ghoulish about praying for the removal of some of the Supreme Court's justices while noting their age and health problems," Barry Lynn, president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said in a statement. "Robertson and his friends want a Supreme Court that enforces the Religious Right's version of biblical law."

Robertson and other conservatives want to change the makeup of the high court in part because of past decisions to legalize abortion and bar government-sanctioned prayer in public schools.

More recently, conservatives blasted the court's June decision to decriminalize state laws that ban certain gay sexual acts. The court's ruling in *Lawrence and Garner vs. Texas* stated that gays and lesbians "are entitled to respect for their private lives."

Robertson's letter said the court's ruling "opened the door to homosexual marriage, bigamy, legalized prostitution and even incest."

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Robertson has a history of criticizing Supreme Court rulings. On Sept. 13, 2001, he asserted that the 9/11 terrorist attacks happened as a result of church-state separation and liberal federal court decisions.

"We have a court that has essentially stuck its finger in God's eye and said, 'We're going to legislate you out of the schools,'" Robertson said on his "700 Club" television program. "We have insulted God at the highest levels of our government. And then we say, 'Why does this [9/11] happen?'"

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Democratic presidential hopefuls endorse gay marriage, civil unions

By Hannah Lodwick

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Three Democratic presidential hopefuls speaking at a July 15 forum said they support gay marriage, while four others expressed their commitment to gay rights but declined to endorse same-sex marriage.

Al Sharpton of New York, Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) and former Sen. Carol Mosley Braun (D-Ill.) -- all considered long shots for the nomination -- each said they support the right of gays and lesbians to marry.

Sens. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean (D) and Rep. Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.) embraced the goal of equal rights and equal protection for homosexuals, including support for same-sex "civil unions" that include some of the benefits of marriage.

The forum, sponsored by the gay civil-rights group Human Rights Campaign, was held in Washington.

Sharpton said questioning whether or not to support gay marriage implies gays are not human beings.

"That's like asking me, 'Do I support white marriage or black marriage?'" Sharpton reportedly said. "The inference of the question is that gays ... cannot make a decision like other human beings."

While Sharpton drew applause with his statement, according to press reports, the audience hissed when Kerry and Lieberman said marriage is a "historic, cultural" institution not intended for gays. But Kerry said no distinction exists between his proposal of equal rights bestowed on civil unions and the rights in marriage.

"I do not support [same-sex] marriage itself," Kerry said. "Marriage is viewed as a union between men and women."

Americans remain divided on the issue of gay marriage. A recent Gallup poll found that 55 percent of Americans oppose it. Some gay-marriage advocates say politicians stumble on gay-rights issues because the public has a problem understanding why so many gay couples want the choice of marriage.

Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign, said the difficulty differentiating between marriage and civil unions comes from a tradition of religious rituals "blessed by the church and synagogue," according to the Washington Post.

"It's a hard distinction for Americans to make and for politicians to make," Birch said of the difference between a sacred union and a civil union. "They struggle with it."

Many Republican leaders, including President Bush, strongly oppose gay marriage. But White House spokesmen have declined to say whether Bush supports a proposed amendment to ban recognition of same-sex marriage on the federal level and invalidate any state or municipal law that gives marriage benefits to gay couples. The amendment has not yet appeared in the Senate.

Many Republicans, like Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), support the Defense of Marriage Act, which was signed into law by then-President Bill Clinton, a Democrat. The law defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman.

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"I very much feel that marriage is a sacrament," Frist said in recent comments on ABC's "This Week" talk show. "That sacrament ... should extend and can extend to the legal entity of a union between what has traditionally in our Western values been defined as between a man and a woman."

The forum came after the recent Supreme Court decision to overturn state laws against sodomy. The 6-3 ruling means the Supreme Court believes all bans on consensual, adult sodomy violate the 14th Amendment's right to privacy. Many religious conservatives are worried that the ruling opens the door to lawsuits overturning heterosexual-only marriage laws.

Additionally, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is poised to rule on a landmark case that could legalize gay marriage in that state. It would make Massachusetts the first state to legalize same-sex marriage, although Vermont allows civil unions.

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Budget cuts at mission board silence influential magazine

By Craig Bird

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) – The Commission no longer goes to the ends of the earth – at least not the printed Southern Baptist version. What that means for Southern Baptists' efforts to carry out the Great Commission remains to be seen.

Citing a \$10 million budget shortfall, the SBC International Mission Board in June cut 37 jobs and suspended publication of its 250,000-circulation magazine, The Commission. Projected annual savings include \$800,000 in printing and postage costs, in addition to an undisclosed amount for the salaries and benefits of terminated staff members.

The IMB's communications staff, which was responsible for the 65-year-old magazine, bore the brunt of the layoffs. By one count, 14 employees from the department were terminated, including several with more than 30 years of IMB experience. An on-line edition of The Commission will continue. Research repeatedly showed The Commission played a significant role in raising money for the IMB, recruiting career missionaries, and informing church leaders about missions.

The Commission "has as her most lasting legacy the untold thousands of Christians who found their concern for missions heightened by what they found in her pages," said longtime editor Leland Webb, now retired. "Because of TC, many advocates of missions bowed their heads in prayer and reached into pocket or purse to give extra dollars."

The Commission also was the only Southern Baptist publication to consistently earn respect and accolades from the secular media. More importantly, Webb said, The Commission "earned a hearing for the gospel and missions in the editorial offices of some major publications whose staffs respected quality wherever they saw it."

Former IMB photographer Charles Ledford was a new Christian when he applied for a job with National Geographic. "They didn't have any openings but encouraged me to contact The Commission, since it was doing great things visually," said Ledford, who last year was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in photography for his work for USA Weekend.

The Commission was a training ground for many talented photographers, designers and writers, such as Pulitzer-nominated Joanna Pinneo, who left the mission board to become a photographer for U.S. News & World Report.

"These artisans, all the while maintaining professional quality in their work, kept as their primary goal to portray the rich and varied story of missions with honesty and passion," said Webb, who retired in 1995 after 30 years with the publication, including the last 15 as editor.

The high cost of the glossy, color publication always attracted the attention of budget cutters, Webb admitted, but until now the "value received" was judged to justify the expense.

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According to Webb's research, 46 percent of career missionaries surveyed between 1986 and 1993 said the magazine played a part in their decision to seek missionary service. A 1993 report noted the IMB had received more than \$10.5 million in trusts, wills or other types of gifts from contacts first made through The Commission.

Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, executive director of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union from 1974 to 1989, was one of the regular readers. "Losing The Commission is almost like losing a family member," she said. "I remember reading it even as a young person in my home church. ... The stories from the fields, along with the pictures, brought missions home to me."

Several terminated employees declined to discuss the IMB's decision on the record. The severance agreements signed by the former employees reportedly limit what they can say about the IMB and the magazine's demise.

Mark Kelly, IMB spokesman, told Associated Press that "nothing has been said about whether the [print] magazine might resume publication." The final regular issue of the magazine will be distributed in August. The November issue, which supports the SBC annual mission offering, also will be produced, though possibly in a new format, according to IMB sources.

Kelly said the move does not affect the IMB's overseas correspondent system, which employs journalists and photographers as career missionaries stationed overseas. The correspondents were frequent writers for the magazine. But Kelly noted, "We still have the on-line version as well as many other channels of communicating with Southern Baptists."

The Commission "was not afraid to compete with the big boys from the secular world of journalism," Webb recalled. The magazine frequently garnered national awards alongside National Geographic, Newsweek and Life. Staffers credit graphic designer Dan Beatty's "phenomenal talent" as the creative force behind the accomplishments.

In the annual Pictures of the Year International competition, The Commission was awarded first place in the national magazine category in 1986. First-place honors were earned in 1988 for best use of photography by a magazine and best editing of a feature story. Other national awards for photography and followed in 1989, 1990 and 2001.

Former career missionary Kathy Wade, whose position as managing editor was cut, expressed more concern for the fate of the magazine than for her job. The demise of The Commission gives her pause, Wade said, "because I know the impact [the magazine] has had on individual lives, individual ministries and individual decisions to be stronger believers in Christ."

"It's not just 56 pages of stories and photographs winning all types of journalism awards," added Wade. "It's been a testament of how God is continually working through his people."

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Group's report says Vines, others contribute to anti-Muslim hate (revised)

By Hannah Lodwick and Robert Marus

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This replaces a story with the same headline originally released June 15. It corrects a quotation in the 19th paragraph and clarifies information in the 20th paragraph.)

WASHINGTON (ABP) – A Muslim-American civil-rights group released a report July 15 that said "evangelical leaders and neo-conservatives" contributed to a 15 percent increase in reports of anti-Muslim incidents in 2002.

The report, conducted annually by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, compiled what the agency called "credible reports" of anti-Muslim discrimination, harassment and action in the United States during 2002. It also catalogued what the group considered public incidents of anti-Muslim bias, blaming Religious Right figures like Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and former Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines, among others, for inciting anti-Islamic actions with their statements.

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"Calling this report 'Guilt by Association' is appropriate," Nihad Awad, the council's executive director, said during a press conference at the agency's Capitol Hill headquarters. "Tens of thousands of people have been impacted in a negative way."

The report noted that, from January to December of 2002, there were 602 reported incidents of anti-Muslim discrimination, a 15-percent increase over the 525 incidents in the previous reporting period. Researchers also said reports of violent physical attacks on Muslims increased by 8 percent in 2002.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations changed its reporting period this year from the previous period, which ran from March 15, 2001-March 14, 2002 – meaning incidents from Jan. 1-March 14, 2002 were counted twice. But Mohamed Nimer, CAIR's research director, said that either way, the number of incidents in a one-year reporting period increased significantly.

The report also noted that since CAIR first started compiling such statistics in 1995 there has been a more than seven-fold increase in reports of anti-Muslim discrimination and bias.

The report also contains harsh criticisms of the federal government, particularly singling out post-Sept. 11 U.S. policies. They said such policies as the USA Patriot Act of 2001 allowed the executive branch of government to get around the Fourth Amendment's requirement of probable cause when conducting police searches.

"We believe the Muslim community can defend their civil rights by being more politically active," Awad said. "One main reason why anti-Muslim sentiments remain prevalent involves misinformation. Muslims feel like they're on the forefront of civil liberties just like the African-Americans in the 1960s."

Government actions mentioned in the report include raids on Muslim homes and businesses, special registration requirements, FBI mosque-counting programs and Department of Justice interviews with more than 11,000 people of Iraqi descent.

Aysha Unus, a guest of the council who spoke at the press conference, said she voted for President Bush in 2000 but now feels his policies have hurt her civil rights.

"I chose to become a citizen of the United States because of its civil rights," Unus said. "I'm here in the hope that things will change."

Unus said she will never forget March 28, 2002, when federal agents broke open her door and handcuffed her in her home. They were part of a massive operation to uncover Northern Virginia residents suspected of cooperating with or supporting Islamic terrorist organizations.

"It is like a videotape inside me, playing almost every day," Unus said. "I go through the experience again and again. It's not fair." Ibrahim Hooper, CAIR's national communications director, noted that no charges have been filed as a result of the raid on Unus' house or any of the other March 2002 raids in Virginia.

While the report focused on increases in anti-Muslim sentiment, it did note that unreasonable searches and passenger profiling of Muslims decreased from 2001 to 2002. In addition, council leaders said, nationwide there were nine successful prosecutions of anti-Muslim hate crimes last year.

Council leaders noted they are attempting not only to point out government shortcomings in respecting the rights of Muslims but also to provide instruction on how better to work with Islamic communities. In an attempt to educate people about civil-rights issues, CAIR published a manual titled the "Law Enforcement Officer's Guide to the Muslim Community."

Awad said the Muslim community must support both civil rights and security, and he hopes the guide will help build a bridge to bolster both objectives.

"Although the government is part of the problem, it is also a part of the solution," Awad said. "We believe in building bridges. The government should look on the Muslim community as an ally. We will help the government do its job and do it properly."

Regarding some Christian leaders, the report said, "Contributing to the rise of discrimination against Muslims is the continuing anti-Muslim rhetoric, especially by some evangelical leaders and neo-conservatives."

Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, raised a national controversy in a June 2002 speech to Southern Baptist pastors when he called Islamic prophet Mohammed a "demon-possessed pedophile."

Both Vines and SBC spokesman Bill Merrell were unavailable for comment when contacted by Associated Baptist Press regarding the Council on American-Islamic Relations' report.

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