



# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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## NewsMakers

◆ Serving as scholars-in-residence at the Baptist Joint Committee are Chaplain, Maj. Gen. Gerald Marsh and his wife, Shelley Marsh. A professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for 25 years, Marsh also served as the top-ranking chaplain in the U. S. Air Force Reserve. Shelley is the sister-in-law of the late John Baker, the BJC's first general counsel. Also, attorney Marc Johns has begun an internship with the agency to provide support in the legal office. He attends Emory University's Candler School of Theology and is studying for a semester in Washington, D.C., through Wesley Theological Seminary.

◆ President Bill Clinton nominated former U.S. Rep. Lindy Boggs as ambassador to the Vatican, replacing Raymond Flynn, who was twice reprimanded by the State Department for speaking out on various issues.

◆ Etowah County (Ala.) Circuit Judge Roy Moore, who is fighting a court order barring him from promoting religion in a courtroom, was named the 1997 Christian Statesman of the Year by the D. James Kennedy Center for Christian Statesmanship. The "issue of acknowledgment of God in this country is at a point which ... there must be a decision made," Moore said. "Are we still one nation under God?" Δ

## House panel approves vouchers; petition signed by clergy disputed

A U.S. House of Representatives panel set the stage for yet another showdown over public funds for private schools by attaching a controversial voucher proposal to a District of Columbia funding bill.

The panel voted 6-3 to send a \$4.2 billion funding bill for the troubled city to the full committee on appropriations. Included in the measure approved Sept. 17 is \$7 million to provide "educational scholarships" or vouchers to some low-income students to attend private and parochial schools.

At a Sept. 16 Capitol Hill news conference, voucher supporters showcased a petition signed by D.C. residents, a petition signed by 120 clergy and a resolution from a local Baptist ministers' group.

The petitions were presented to House Speaker Newt Gingrich, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and a bipartisan group of lawmakers.

But at least two ministers have since asked that their names be removed from the clergy petition.

Earl Trent Jr., pastor of Florida Avenue Baptist Church, said petition solicitors misrepresented the D.C. proposal. Trent joined other clergy members at a press conference to oppose vouchers and the clergy petition. He said it is misleading when the measure is only described as a "scholarship" for poor kids. "It's something that's kind of hard to say 'no' to until you find out what they're talking

about, which is public money for private schools," he said.

Gingrich said those opposed to vouchers ought to put their children in the worst public school in the inner-city. He asked why D.C. children did not have the right to attend the best schools, "the same as the children of rich folks."

*Vouchers violate the separation of church and state.*

— Eleanor Holmes Norton



D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton had a message for lawmakers who want to impose the plan on the district in the face of

a 1981 referendum in which residents voted against vouchers 89 percent to 11 percent. "Go home. Go to your own hometown and enact vouchers there. That will give your claim about caring about kids more credibility."

She said D.C. residents should not be "guinea pigs in an experiment against our will." Norton also said vouchers were unconstitutional and that the First Amendment is "intended to protect religion from government."

Norton noted that "Catholic schools use an appropriate system of preferences. And that is appropriate. Nothing we do here should tempt them away from their religious priorities," she said, implying that tax dollars would open the door for government to tell religious schools how to operate.

Although some lawmakers are pushing for vouchers in D.C., Lott signaled recently that congressional leaders may shift from voucher proposals to tax incentives for private and parochial schools. Δ

## Pat Robertson — in his own words

"I told (Christian Coalition President) Don Hodel when he joined us, 'My dear friend, I want to hold out to you the possibility of selecting the next president of the United States, because I think that's what we have in this organization.'

"... So I don't think at this time and juncture the Democrats are going to be able to take the White House unless we throw it away.

"... We've had a major presence in one of the major parties; we still haven't gotten the influence I think we ought to have inside the Republican Party.

"... I have seen a steamroller of liberalism trying to crush faith out of our life. It's all under the rubric of 'separation of church and state,' and you know that's a distortion of what the framers of the Constitution intended.

"... Christians are not second-class citizens; we're going to fight for our rights. And if we have to get a constitutional amendment to do it, we'll do it. It's not that hard once you get the Congress to vote. We just tell these guys, 'Look, we put you in power in 1994, and we want you to deliver. We're tired of temporizing. Don't give us all this stuff about you've got a different agenda.'"

— Excerpts of taped remarks by Pat Robertson at a Sept. 13 Christian Coalition meeting were released by Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

## Religious persecution bill approved by House panel

A House panel approved a popular measure Sept. 18 that would create a White House office to monitor global religious persecution. The measure now goes to the full committee on international relations.

By voice vote, the panel unanimously agreed to an amended version of the "Freedom From Religious Persecution Act," co-sponsored by Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., and Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa.

Rep. Benjamin Gilman, R-N.Y., chairman of the House International Relations Committee, has pledged swift action. Gilman's committee held two days of hearings on the issue.

Several religious leaders testified before the committee in support of the legislation, including a Tibetan Buddhist nun and a Sudanese Christian who described religious persecution in their countries and pleaded for U.S. action.

Under the measure, the director of the Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring would report on the oppression of religious minorities and could impose automatic economic sanctions on offending nations. The sanctions could only be waived by the president in instances of national security.

Religious groups, particularly evangelical Christians, have sought to raise awareness of religious persecution and have called on the U.S. government to respond. Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition has listed opposing religious persecution as its "top legislative priority."

House Speaker Newt Gingrich pledged to "take action on this vital issue."

The Clinton administration opposes the bill in its current form. Several human rights and religious groups, while agreeing with the bill's purpose of fighting persecution, have also voiced concern that sanctions will result in more persecution, not less.

Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck said the measure would "tie the hands of the secretary of state, the president and all other officials who would want to engage with these countries to stop what they're doing."

He said the measure would create a "blunt instrument" that could possibly bring more harm than good.

Wolf said that he was "shocked" that

the administration was opposing the bill. "Is business being put in front of human rights?" he asked. "Haven't we learned that silence reflects acquiescence?"

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. sent a letter to the House committee which stated that the organization could not support the bill "until and unless significant changes are made."

In a letter to NCC Executive Director Joan Brown Campbell, Chinese bishop K.H. Ting warned that overt American intervention "would only jeopardize what we have been doing."

## Religious workers seek renewal of visa measure

Religious charities and groups want congressional lawmakers to extend an immigration law that allows foreign religious workers to stay in the United States.

Provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 are set to expire Sept. 30. If Congress fails to extend the measure, thousands of workers at churches and charities may be forced to leave the country.

The special provisions for religious workers expire every three years. Lawmakers on the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration are seeking to extend the provisions permanently by removing the "sunset" provision in the law.

However, a spokesman for a House lawmaker said there were incidents of fraud and abuse in the system and thus sponsors of the original bill wanted to keep the sunset provision.

J. Brent Walker, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee, said that "we must keep the doors of immigration open for ministers and religious workers. And we don't need to fight the battle again every three years."

At a recent Senate panel hearing, Sen. Spencer Abraham, R-Mich., read a letter from Mother Teresa urging the law's renewal.

Abraham said, "As a nation founded by people who came to these shores so they and their children could worship freely, it is only appropriate that our country welcome those who wish to help our religious organizations provide pastoral and other relief to people around this nation." Δ

# Church-State Intersection

*J. Brent Walker*

General Counsel



Two hundred and ten years ago this week our founders adopted the republic's cornerstone charter, the U.S. Constitution.

A recently released poll reveals some astonishing facts about how the public perceives that all-important document. There seems to be a lot of heart-felt reverence for the Constitution. The survey reports that 91 percent consider the Constitution important and 89 percent are proud of it.

Unfortunately, there is a complete inversion when we move from the heart to the head, because most Americans *know* almost nothing about our Constitution and the system of government it established.

How many U.S. senators are there? Only one out of two Americans knew the answer is 100. How many branches are there in the federal government? Only 40 percent knew the answer to that difficult question.

The Associated Press reported that fewer than one-fifth of those surveyed could correctly answer eight of ten basic questions, such as how long senators serve (six years), who nominates Supreme Court justices (the president) and what the first 10 amendments to the Constitution are called (the Bill of Rights).

When it comes to church-state issues, the results were no better — maybe worse. Sixteen percent think the Constitution declares Christianity the official religion of the United States. And 24 percent cannot name *any* of the First Amendment rights — freedom of speech, press, religion and assembly. Only 41 percent specifically recalled freedom of religion.

What's behind this? Of course, some of it is the clever slight of hand by those who peddle the revisionist lie that this is a Christian nation legally and constitu-

tionally. Is it apathy? Yes, to some degree. But let's own up to the problem and call it what it is: just plain ignorance.

The answer is education, education and more education.

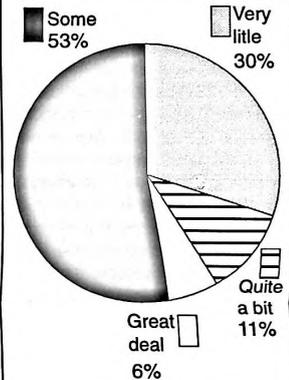
We at the Baptist Joint Committee are committed to doing all we can to educate our next generation of Baptists and American citizens. We simply cannot expect to perpetuate strong protections for religious freedom and the separation of church and state unless people understand the basic constitutional constructs that uphold those values and affirm at the gut level that these values are important to their daily lives.

How can you help? Several things:

- (1) Read *Report from the Capital* religiously. Give subscriptions to friends. Place a bulk order for your church.
- (2) Order and teach our four-lesson Sunday school curriculum (mainly for youth) titled, *Citizens of Two Kingdoms*. No one who sits through these lessons will miss very many of the survey questions.
- (3) Make sure your public schools are teaching about our fundamental documents and the principles they embody, such as religious liberty.
- (4) Join the Religious Liberty Council of the Baptist Joint Committee. The RLC's primary task is to help educate Baptists and the public generally about the importance of religious freedom and separation of church and state.
- (5) Check the BJC's web site for up-to-date information, speeches and articles. Our address, [www.bjcpa.org](http://www.bjcpa.org), is easy to remember and to give to others.

Won't you help us wage war on the ignorance and apathy? If we don't — if you don't — we may soon lose those freedoms that our wise founders so ably protected more than 200 years ago. Δ

## How much do you feel you know about the Constitution?



Source: National Constitution Center

## Baptist Joint Committee

### Supporting Bodies

- ◆ Alliance of Baptists
- ◆ American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- ◆ Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- ◆ National Baptist Convention of America
- ◆ National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.
- ◆ National Missionary Baptist Convention
- ◆ North American Conference
- ◆ Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
- ◆ Religious Liberty Council
- ◆ Seventh Day Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Southern Baptist state conventions/churches

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# Film Review

## Battle for the Minds

*This documentary by Steven Lipscomb aired June 10 on the PBS series "Point of View." For ordering information, call 800-343-5540.*



Steven Lipscomb's documentary account of the forced resignation of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor of theology Molly Marshall amounts to a case study in the transformation of the Southern Baptist Convention over the past two decades.

The narrative is carried by numerous key players, mostly trustees, faculty, former faculty and students at the Louisville, Ky., institution. Marshall's opponents and supporters have their say on the question that brought Marshall down: Shall women be trained and called as pastors of Southern Baptist congregations?

Yet Lipscomb succeeds in this briskly moving production to lay out the broader lines of battle in the successful plot to take over the SBC, including its delivery to the Christian right as a major player in the battle for the soul of the nation.

This latter point is particularly well made by former Southern Seminary Professor Paul Simmons. What is of national consequence in the takeover, he says, is the loss of the nation's largest Protestant denomination as an advocate for religious freedom and its political corollary, separation of church and state. Baptists' historical advocacy of those principles, Simmons states, is their singular contribution to the political order.

Heroes and villains abound in the morality play that is *Battle for the Minds*. Molly Marshall's unshakable integrity stands in sharp contrast to new Southern

Seminary President Albert Mohler's rank opportunism. Unlike Mohler, she looks directly into the eye of the camera and states her case.

The fundamentalists' fierce opposition to women as pastors actually is much better made by Southeastern Seminary President Paige Patterson and David Miller, the steely Arkansas director of missions and Southern Seminary trustee. Each is given generous camera time to make the case. To their credit they make it clearly. And chillingly. If you're for women in the pulpit, you've defied God. The film makes these two out to be what they are — true believers.

Retired professor Henlee Barnette, one of Southern Baptists' best-known ethicists, makes the same case against the wooden biblical inerrancy advocated by Patterson and Miller when he wryly observes, "Why don't we hold to slavery? The Bible teaches that, too."

Besides Marshall, Lipscomb's heroes include her student and his mother, Dixie Petrey, whose anger and grief at the developments in Louisville inspired the Los Angeles director to sink a big chunk of money he didn't have into the making of the film. Her sense of pathos in describing the overnight transformation of Southern Seminary from a place that encouraged women to one where they are suppressed is palpable.

This is a valuable piece of work, not only for Baptists in the South, but for every mainline denomination beset by fundamentalist insurgencies. Its value is as a warning: "What happened to the Southern Baptist Convention can happen to \_\_\_\_\_"

— Stan Hastey  
Executive Director, Alliance of Baptists



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