



# REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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## NewsMakers

◆ The Rev. Jesse Jackson has announced his opposition to President George W. Bush's plan to allow faith-based groups to receive federal funding for social service programs. "The cross and the flag should never interchange," Jackson said in a sermon, *The Washington Times* reported. "When the government and the church get too close, neither one can see Jesus."

◆ The Rev. Carol Franklin Sutton, executive director of American Baptist Women's Ministries and a former staff member at the Baptist Joint Committee, will on March 1 become national movement director of ABC's NEW LIFE 2010 emphasis. The ABC emphasis seeks to plant 1,010 new churches and reach 1,000,010 new believers by 2010. Previously, Sutton was a commissioned American Baptist missionary in the National Ministries' Office of Government Relations in Washington, D.C.

◆ Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony has apologized for asking former President Bill Clinton to pardon convicted drug figure Carlos Vignali, saying he should have known more about the case before intervening. Mahony wrote a letter to Clinton in 1996, saying that Vignali was innocent. Vignali had been sentenced to 15 years for helping to convert 800 pounds of powder cocaine into crack. Δ

## Hollman named general counsel at Baptist Joint Committee

K. Hollyn Hollman has been named general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee.

A litigation associate at the Washington, D.C., office of McGuireWoods, Hollman will join the BJC staff effective March 5.

Hollman succeeds Melissa Rogers, who left the BJC post in November to become executive director of The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.

BJC Executive Director Brent Walker welcomed Hollman's decision to accept the general counsel's post.

"I'm excited about Holly's joining the BJC family," Walker said. "She is a first-rate lawyer and a gifted leader who will be a strong and effective voice for religious liberty.

"Melissa left big shoes to fill, and I am confident Holly can fill them," Walker added.

Hollman is a 1995 graduate of the University of Tennessee College of Law, where she served on the National Moot Court Team, wrote for the *Tennessee Law Review* and received the Vinson & Elkins Award for Excellence in Brief Writing. During 1994-95, she was a visiting student at Stanford University School of Law in Stanford, Calif.

Hollman is a 1989 *cum laude* graduate of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., with a B.A. in politics.

From 1995-1999, she was a litigation associate in the labor and employment law section of Waller Lansden Dortch & Davis in Nashville, Tenn. In addition to

representing employers in federal and state court, Hollman served as Equal Employment Opportunity officer for the Tennessee Titans of the National Football League. She also served on the firm's hiring committee.

Last year, Hollman joined McGuireWoods. In addition to representing employers in court, Hollman advised management clients and conducted training workshops on employment law.

Hollman served as an intern and a legal assistant at the BJC during 1991-1992. While a law student, she served as a clinic intern at the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund in Berkeley, Calif.

Hollman is a member of the District of Columbia and Tennessee bars and the American Bar Association.

Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel at the BJC when Hollman served as a legal assistant, praised her selection.

"For starters, Holly understands Baptists," Thomas said. "Her parents have been stalwarts in their local church, and Holly did her first stint at the BJC as a college intern. Add to that history a keen intellect, winsome personality and experience in two prestigious law firms, and you have the recipe for the kind of general counsel who may become the BJC's best ever."

Hollman is married to Jay Smith, a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University in D.C. Δ



K. Hollyn Hollman

## Indianapolis church seized by IRS

A prayer vigil inside an Indianapolis church came to an abrupt end Feb. 13 as federal marshals seized the Indianapolis Baptist Temple.

"We had a promise from the Bush administration," said the Rev. Greg J. Dixon, whose son succeeded him as pastor about three years ago. "We had every reason to believe there was a moratorium. They were going to dismiss the case. We had a deal, and they welshed on the deal."

About six or seven people were inside the church praying when authorities entered, The Associated Press reported. Officials were forced to remove Dixon by wheeling him out of the church on a gurney, but no one was arrested or injured.

Under a federal judge's ruling last September, the congregation was ordered to relinquish its building to the Internal Revenue Service to pay some \$6 million in delinquent taxes. The church, which lost its tax-exempt status in the mid-1990s, was told to vacate its premises by Nov. 14.

The September ruling followed a 1999 decision that sided with the IRS' claim the church owed \$5.9 million in back taxes, penalties and interest for refusing to withhold federal income, Medicare and Social Security taxes from employees' paychecks. Δ

## Disability initiative offers matching funds to churches

President George W. Bush's recently announced initiative to build on the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 would for the first time offer federal matching funds to houses of worship and private clubs that want to build wheelchair ramps, elevators and other access renovations.

According to an outline of the New Freedom Initiative provided by the White House, the Bush plan would provide annual federal matching grants to ADA-exempt organizations such as churches to assist "in making sure their facilities are fully accessible to the disabled."

"Because all ADA-exempt organizations will be eligible for the grants, irrespective of whether they are religious or secular, they would comport with the Supreme Court's test for constitutional neutrality," the document states.

In announcing the plan at a recent White House event, Bush said: "In many houses of worship and civic centers, intentions are good, but resources are scarce. We can help make these community places open to all."

One church-state separation advocate raised concerns about the plan.

"This is a classic case of wanting your cake and eating it, too," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Lynn said churches resisted compliance with the ADA 11 years ago, saying whether to make their buildings handicap-accessible should be voluntary. "And now they come back wanting to have the structural improvements paid for with tax dollars," said Lynn, calling the proposal "a special privilege for religious groups." Δ

## Bill allowing priests to hold office advances in England

A bill to allow Roman Catholic priests and other ministers to become members of Parliament received a second reading by the House of Commons on Feb. 6.

Although no vote was taken on the bill, it is likely to become law before the general election, expected to take place in May.

The bill was introduced because David Cairns, the Labor Party candidate for the safe seat of Greenock and Inverclyde in Scotland, is a former Catholic priest. The present MP, Norman Godman, is retiring.

The bill now has to go through its committee stage in the Commons and be given

a third reading before going to the House of Lords for approval.

Although the bill would make it possible for a Roman Catholic priest to sit in the Commons, any active priest would be barred by church law from doing so.

Legislation dating to 1801 and 1829 disqualifies from membership in the House of Commons those ordained as priests or deacons, ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and "persons in holy orders in the Church of Rome." However, an 1870 law enables Church of England clergy to relinquish their clerical status and be eligible for membership in the Commons after a six-month wait. Δ

## Coalition of nonprofits backs non-itemizer deductions

An organization representing more than 700 foundations and nonprofit organizations announced support for President George W. Bush's proposal to allow non-itemizers to deduct charitable donations from their income for tax purposes.

But Independent Sector criticized the Bush proposal to repeal the estate tax, charging the move would "discourage charitable bequests."

Sara Melendez, president and CEO of Independent Sector, said Feb. 8 that while the organization "is encouraged by the inclusion of the charitable deduction for non-itemizers in the president's plan, we are concerned over the effect the proposed repeal of the estate tax could have to discourage charitable bequests.

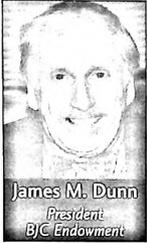
"At a time when the need for increased giving is as great as ever, Congress and the new administration should ensure that strong incentives for charitable bequests continue," Melendez said.

"The non-itemizer deduction is a proposal that everyone can agree on," she said. "This proposal rightfully enjoys a prominent place in President Bush's tax package because it would inspire new donors, stimulate a surge in additional giving, increase tax fairness — and it enjoys the widespread support of charities of all causes in every state."

Melendez said the plan would give approximately 85 million people who do not itemize on tax returns the same incentive and treatment as itemizers.

According to new research by Price-waterhouseCoopers for Independent Sector, the non-itemizer deduction would generate as much as \$14.6 billion in the first year in new giving and create 11 million new donors. Δ

# Except for the details, charitable choice scheme might be all right



**W**e literally sat at the feet of Hugo Black in 1964. The Supreme Court Justice graciously answered questions. "What," one asked, "do the words 'no law' mean in the First Amendment?" Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.

He responded. "They mean two things: no and law." Not being cute, he simply took the Constitution seriously.

First, "charitable choice" — the dumping of tax dollars on churches to fund social services — is patently unconstitutional. It is no single piece of legislation that can be surgically excised. It is an approach, a patchwork quilt of amendments, addenda to federal funding.

"No law" surely means no budget law, no federal funding, no spending law. Yet, President Bush would spend billions on such programs.

Next, "charitable choice" is patently wrong. To be so dogmatic, so categorical, so certain (as I am), one must have an ethical perspective. It is not out of bounds for political philosophers and public servants to know how folks function, to have some pre-suppositions about human nature.

Mr. Madison and others knew about serious sin, saw the need for restraints, boundaries; hence, separation of church and state is written into our national charter, our collective code of conduct.

"Charitable choice" is an unprecedented intrusion of government into religious life.

Dilution hovers over government undergirding religious outreach. Either pervasive evangelization or prophetic proclamation of gospel goals or both would be certain to suffer. Believers have trouble separating aspects of ministry. One cannot casually cut off the Christian witness from ministry to human need. We do not like to call telling folks about Jesus proselytizing, but that is the word used.

Preaching the good news to the poor, the captive, the suffering involves challenging public policies and practices. How odd to have evangelicals clamoring for government goodies, the acceptance of which would certainly water down the message of

churches, "bought off."

Dependency looms large on the horizon of help from Uncle Sam. Dependency upon government — or any political party or process — is unwholesome for churches.

Discrimination would not only be allowed, it would be demanded. Churches, to keep their programs "faith-based" at all, would need to favor employing their own people, those that work by faith. Or, to avoid turning away the social worker from a strange sect, discrimination is inevitable.

Divisiveness comes with competition. This is not a church softball league. Anyone who thinks that billions of dollars will not nudge even saintly sinners toward unhealthy "divine" division does not know much about real world religion.

Deception lies just beneath the surface in public promotion of the "charitable choice" option. Some ministers envision a great government giveaway without rules, regulations, guidelines or guard rails. When has that ever been? Reporting and monitoring alone will make some preachers think they have climbed in bed with a bear. There is a bit of political flimflam behind the courtship of ministers who did not vote for this administration.

Dishonesty lurks: subtle, easily rationalized, but untruthful nonetheless. Fungible means being of such a nature that one unit or part may be exchanged for another equivalent. The funds fueling "charitable choice" would be fungible. In plain language, money could be moved from the social service pocket to the evangelization purse. Government would be getting into the religion business. Do I honestly believe that persons of the cloth would do something like that? You bet your life I do.

Then "charitable choice" tends toward dilution, dependency, discrimination, divisiveness, deception and dishonesty. Other than that it's OK.

In the recent Ashcroft hearings, I pleaded with the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold extensive hearings on "charitable choice." The scheme has become government's way without ever being seriously evaluated by Congress.

Two senators expressed interest in rethinking the "charitable choice" option that now threatens to spawn a White House office for giving money to churches. Maybe Sens. Durbin of Illinois (D) and Specter of Pennsylvania (R) will prevail, and we'll finally have a real debate about the matter. Δ

## Most pastors lukewarm on faith-based plan

A new survey of Protestant ministers shows most pastors are lukewarm to President George W. Bush's proposal to fund faith-based organizations in exchange for providing social services.

The study by Phoenix-based Ellison Research found that only 17 percent of pastors strongly supported the program, while 13 percent strongly opposed it. The rest of the pastors surveyed fell somewhere in the middle.

For pastors who did not take a strong stand either way, 46 percent offered weak support for the idea, as opposed to 24 percent who said they were marginally opposed to it.

The strongest support for the proposal came from pastors affiliated with the conservative-leaning National Association of Evangelicals — 77 percent of NAE-affiliated pastors said they support the program. Among churches affiliated with the more liberal National Council of Churches, 62 percent of pastors supported the program.

Ron Sellers, president of Ellison, said the pastors seem to reflect the opinions of most Americans on the proposal. "Pastors ... seem to be taking a wait-and-see attitude toward federally funded faith-based assistance," he said in a press release. Δ

### Baptist Joint Committee

#### Supporting Bodies

- ◆ Alliance of Baptists
- ◆ American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.
- ◆ Baptist General Association of Virginia
- ◆ Baptist General Conference
- ◆ Baptist General Convention of Texas
- ◆ Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
- ◆ Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- ◆ National Baptist Convention of America
- ◆ National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.
- ◆ National Missionary Baptist Convention
- ◆ North American Baptist Conference
- ◆ Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
- ◆ Religious Liberty Council
- ◆ Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

#### REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

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### What's God Got To Do with the American Experiment?

E. J. Dionne Jr., and John J. Dilulio Jr., editors. Brookings Institution Press: Washington, D.C., 2000.



Two senior fellows of the Brookings Institution, E.J. Dionne Jr., and John J. Dilulio Jr. in *What's God Got To Do with the American Experiment*, offer a splendid collection of essays covering a range of issues on the spectrum of religious faith and democratic life in the United States.

Dionne is also a columnist for *The Washington Post*, and Dilulio has recently been appointed by President Bush to lead the newly created White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. The essays in this volume, contributed by an impressive lineup of scholars, journalists and religious and community leaders, explore perspectives on a wide spectrum of opinion by assessing various contemporary issues in religion and public life.

Several writers review the current landscape of religious belief and practice in the United States by surveying the recent growth of religious groups and examining changing political and moral values in the nation and within families. In a section focusing upon politics and witness, contributors grapple with the paradox of Christian involvement in politics. Peter Wehner's imaginative essay, reminiscent of C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, has a devious demon counseling his fiendish apprentice to deceive Christians by blinding them to the hazards of political power and enticing them to ignore the truth of their own message. Former Moral Majoritarians Ed Dobson and Cal Thomas deliver a stern jeremiad to conservative Christians who are lured by the siren song of

politics. The editors have also included responses to the Clinton sex scandal that reveal stark differences about the parameters of private and public morality.

The sweeping welfare reform legislation of 1996 brought new attention to charitable choice initiatives and the role of religious organizations in arresting social decay and stimulating neighborhood revitalization. Throughout the book, enthusiasts tout the promise of these efforts. Melissa Rogers, former general counsel at the Baptist Joint Committee, sounds a cautious and convincing warning that these faith-based initiatives do right the wrong way — because they violate cherished American principles of church-state separation.

This work will appeal to a wide audience of readers and is an excellent addition to the growing field of works on religion and public life in America. One of the greatest values of these collected essays is the clear presentation of the renegotiation of religious and political boundaries that is currently taking place in American society. Even though the essays primarily focus upon recent events, they nevertheless provide a lens through which the reader can examine timeless issues concerning religion and public life that are inseparable from the history and character of the United States. As the editors themselves state in their introduction, religion probes mysteries that neither science nor politics can address and offers a force for understanding and transforming the world. For this reason alone, discussions about God will always be central to the idea of the American experiment.

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