

eSalt Volume 6 Issue 21 2005



**Bringing you IMPORTANT news from our nation's capitol**

**Volume 6**

**Issue 21**

**2005**

A publication of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

**Nashville Office**

901 Commerce St #550  
Nashville, TN 37203  
(615) 244-2495  
Fax (615) 242-0065

**Washington Office**

505 Second St., NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 547-8105  
Fax (202) 547-8165

**A For Faith & Family Ministry Partner**

[www.faithandfamily.com](http://www.faithandfamily.com)

**Richard D. Land**  
President

**Tom Strode**  
Editor

**Jerry Price**  
Associate Editor

©2005 all rights reserved

We expect our government to insist that nations who want to be in good relation with us cease and desist from persecuting Christians. A foreign policy that denies our basic values and seeks only to meet the requirements of commerce and business is totally unacceptable.

Some foreign governments think America is a "money-bags" democracy for sale to the highest bidder and enslaved by the bottom line. They are wrong. Most Americans still cherish the timeless truths of our Declaration of Independence. America still believes "that all men are created equal" and "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights" and "that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

That is our priceless, timeless heritage as Americans, and Americans want our government to make that clear to all the governments of the world. (Salt, 1997)  
**Dr. Richard Land**  
President, SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Not yet a subscriber? Subscriptions are free. To sign up, click [here](#).

[Land urges passage of workplace religion bill](#) Richard Land told members of Congress at a recent hearing a new law is needed to

Southern Baptist  
Historical Library & Archives  
Nashville, TN  
DEC 06 2005

restore protection for the religious rights of employees.

[Lethal infections prompt study of RU 486](#) Federal officials will investigate the safety of the abortion drug RU 486 after they learned the four California women who died following its use suffered from an uncommon and lethal bacterial infection, The New York Times has reported.

[Land commends Bush actions in China](#) ERLC President Richard Land applauded President Bush's attendance at a church service and his promotion of religious liberty while he was in China recently.

[Internet gambling bill introduced](#) A bill to stop illegal Internet gambling was introduced Nov. 18 in the House of Representatives.

[Thomas: Confirmation battles all about abortion](#) Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas recently told University of Alabama law students his volatile confirmation process and the battles over other federal court nominees focus on a single issue—abortion.

### Internet Anti-pornography Software

Bsafe is endorsed by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. (We protect our employees with Bsafe Online on our office computers.)

For information on **Bible-based resources** useful for educating your family on the moral and ethical issues of our day and for engaging the culture, such as our informative Culture Response Kit, contact the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission at (800) 475-9127 or visit our [online store](#).

### Write to Congress



Enter ZIP Code  GO

Find Your Reps

You can also reach the Capitol Hill switchboard by calling (202) 225-3121.

To obtain the latest information on a U.S. Senate or House bill, click [here](#).

### Land urges passage of workplace religion bill

Richard Land told members of Congress at a recent hearing a new law is needed to restore protection for the religious rights of employees.

Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, told a House of Representatives subcommittee the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (WRFA) should be passed in order to reinstate free exercise rights undermined by court action. Land joined Richard Foltin, legislative director of the American Jewish Committee, in testifying on behalf of a diverse coalition supporting WRFA.

WRFA, [H.R. 1445](#) in the House and [S. 677](#) in the Senate, would act to correct a narrow interpretation of the requirement upon employers to accommodate the religious rights of their workers. Congress amended the Civil Rights Act in 1972 to require employers to accommodate their employees' religious rights unless it would place an "undue hardship" upon the employer. The Supreme Court, however, ruled in a 1977 decision the hardship need only be minimal, not substantial, and effectively negated the law.

The coalition is united in its belief an "employee's religious needs should be accommodated at work" as long as they do not "adversely affect third parties," whether the third party is the employer, a fellow employee, or a customer or client, Land said.

The coalition—which includes evangelical Christians, Jews, Roman Catholics, Muslims, mainline Protestants, Sikhs and others—is united on "the simple principle that we will not prejudice particular faiths or practices," Land said. "[W]e all have challenges to our religious observances, and this is truly one of those situations where we protect our own by protecting everyone."

America's founders considered religious freedom to be the right to practice faith not just believe it, Land said. "This is reflected in the historical record of the debates about the First Amendment which show that the Framers rejected a proposed First Amendment text which would have protected freedom 'of conscience' for a text that protects 'free exercise,'" he said.

The hearing was held Nov. 10 before the Employer-Employee Relations Subcommittee of the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

[Back to Top](#)

**Lethal infections prompt study of RU 486**

Federal officials will investigate the safety of the abortion drug RU 486 after they learned the four California women who died following its use suffered from an uncommon and lethal bacterial infection, The New York Times has reported.

Because all four deaths so far reported in the United States after RU 486 use took place in California, the Food and Drug Administration conducted research to determine if pills dispensed in the state were contaminated, according to The Times. Tests showed they were not contaminated, however.

The FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will sponsor a meeting in early 2006 to discuss, among other things, whether RU 486 makes its users susceptible to the lethal bacteria, *Clostridium sordelli*, and, if it does, how it might be detected and prevented, The Times reported Nov. 23.

The father of one of the California women who died repeated his call for the suspension of RU 486 sales. "I believe this drug should be taken off the market," Monty Patterson told The Times.

Among the deaths, that of Patterson's 18-year-old daughter, Holly, has been by far the most widely publicized. A resident of Livermore, Calif., she died Sept. 17, 2003, after obtaining RU 486 from a Planned Parenthood clinic in Hayward, Calif. A bill, known as Holly's Law, has been introduced in Congress that would remove RU 486 from the market while a review is conducted of the FDA's approval of the drug.

ERLC President Richard Land and six other pro-life, pro-family leaders wrote Rep. Joe Barton, R.-Texas, chairman of the House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Committee, a September letter urging him to hold a hearing on the bill, officially titled the RU 486 Suspension and Review Act, [H.R. 1079](#), and to schedule a vote by the panel soon.

"H.R. 1079 is a logical response to the acknowledged role of this drug in the deaths of a number of women and to the mounting concern that this drug poses significant health risks to every woman who uses it," the letter said.

Joining Land on the letter were Tom Minnery, vice president of Focus on the Family; Beverly LaHaye, chairman of Concerned Women for America; Phyllis Schlafly, president of Eagle Forum; Paul Weyrich, national chairman of Coalitions for America; Mariam Bell, public policy director for Prison Fellowship, and Connie Mackey, vice president of Family Research Council.

RU 486, or mifepristone, is used as the first part of a process normally occurring in the first seven weeks of pregnancy. That initial action causes the lining of the uterus to release the embryonic child. A second drug, known as misoprostol, is taken two days after mifepristone and causes the uterus to contract, expelling the baby.

[Back to Top](#)**Land commends Bush actions in China**

ERLC President Richard Land applauded President Bush's attendance at a church service and his promotion of religious liberty while he was in China recently.

Bush and his wife, Laura, attended Beijing's Gangwashi Church, a congregation registered with the Chinese government, during a morning worship service Nov. 20.

Outside the church building afterward, Bush said, "My hope is that the government of China will not fear Christians who gather to worship openly. A healthy society is a society that welcomes all faiths and gives people a chance to express themselves through worship with the Almighty."

Later in the day, the President told reporters he had talked to Chinese leaders about both religious and political freedom. "A society which recognizes religious freedom is a society which will recognize political freedoms, as well," he said.

Land said he is "delighted the President chose to highlight the cause of religious freedom while he was in China. He has done this before, and it does help to keep the issue on the front burner both in world opinion and with Chinese government officials."

Recent crackdowns on Christian leaders again have demonstrated how limited religious freedom is under China's communist regime, a fact confirmed by a November report from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. Land and six other members of the USCIRF spent 15 days in August in China. The bipartisan panel reported repression continues of unapproved religious groups and urged the U.S. government to take a variety of steps to influence reform by the Beijing government.

"While it is clear that more space has been created for religious expression than previously existed in China or ever existed in the Soviet Union, it is also true that there is still significant government control," Land said. "What China has is limited toleration of religious expression through registered churches, which are strictly regulated and monitored.

"This is why perhaps as many as five times as many Christians choose to worship in unregistered venues, even with the constant threat of arrest and persecution, than worship in registered venues," he said. "I'm sure the President chose to worship in a registered church setting for the same reason that our commission chose not to meet with members of the underground and unregistered

church, i.e., it would expose the underground church and Christians to possible retaliation from the government after the American officials had returned home."

[Back to Top](#)

#### **Internet gambling bill introduced**

A bill to stop illegal Internet gambling was introduced Nov. 18 in the House of Representatives.

The Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act, [H.R. 4411](#), is designed to bar the use of credit cards, fund transfers and other methods of payment for illegal, online gambling. The legislation does not prohibit any forms of gambling that are currently legal.

Similar legislation has been introduced in past years but has yet to gain passage in Congress.

Rep. Jim Leach, R.-Iowa, is the bill's sponsor. There are 18 cosponsors.

Barrett Duke, the ERLC's vice president for public policy and research, sees the bill as "a very positive step in our efforts to shut down much of the illegal, predatory gambling activity on the web."

[Back to Top](#)

#### **Thomas: Confirmation battles all about abortion**

Supreme Court Associate Justice Clarence Thomas recently told University of Alabama law students his volatile confirmation process and the battles over other federal court nominees focus on a single issue—abortion.

"I think we all should be honest with one another that the only issue, the central issue in all of this, is abortion," Thomas said, according to the Associated Press. "It's not the other things that people throw out. The whole judiciary now is being held, in a sense, hostage to that one issue."

It appears abortion indeed will be the focus in the battle over new high court nominee Samuel Alito. Thomas' Nov. 11 comments in Tuscaloosa, Ala., were made only three days before *The Washington Times* reported Alito wrote in a 1985 application for a Department of Justice position "the Constitution does not protect a right to an abortion." The revelation set off a new round of questioning or criticism by pro-choice senators and abortion rights advocates. Confirmation hearings on Alito are scheduled to begin Jan. 9.

Thomas said some of his former clerks and other lawyers frequently say they are uninterested in being federal judges because of their dread of possible confirmation fights. "I think that's a problem when the stars are beginning to say, 'Thank you, but no thanks,'" said Thomas, who was confirmed by only a 52-48 Senate vote in 1991.

The current system of seeking to investigate every part of a nominee's life should be changed, Thomas said. He has yet to meet a judge who seeks to impose his own agenda through rulings, Thomas told the students.

"The whole process of trying to ferret out the personal agenda through the confirmation process isn't an endeavor that I think is worth the price we are paying," he said. "I think the only thing it does is rats out the agenda of the people asking the questions."

[Back to Top](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)