REPORT from the Capital

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INSIDE:

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New survey finds growing unease with mixing religion and politics

WASHINGTON — A growing number of Americans think there is too much religious talk by politicians and that churches should keep out of politics, according to a national survey released March 21.

The survey of nearly 1,500 adults was conducted March 7-11 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life.

Thirty-eight percent of respondents said there had been too much expression of religious faith and prayer from political leaders, while 30 percent said there was too little. These are remarkably different results than a 2010 Pew survey when 29 percent said there was too much religious talk and 37 percent said there was too little. In both the 2012 and 2010 surveys, nearly 25 percent said there was the right amount. The Pew Research Center reports that the number saying there has been too much religious talk from political leaders now stands at its highest point since it started asking the question more than a decade ago.

J. Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, said that while you cannot divorce religion from politics, it is encouraging that a growing number of Americans are seeing the pitfalls that come with an overuse or misuse of religion for political purposes.

"Conducting campaigns with overt appeals based on religion and messages to voters that reflect religious prejudice, bias and stereotyping violates this country's most fundamental values and ultimately threatens the protection of everyone's religious freedom," Walker said.

The survey also found that the majority of respondents — 54 percent — believed churches should stay out of politics, while 40 percent thought churches should express views on social and political questions. This is the third consecutive Pew poll conducted since 2008 suggesting that more Americans believe churches should keep away from politics. In 1996, the attitudes were nearly reverse of this year's poll, when 54 percent believed that churches should weigh in on social and political questions and 43 percent believed churches should refrain from speaking out.

On the question of church involvement in social and political issues, there is sharp division among religious groups. Sixty percent of white evangelical Protestants surveyed said churches and other houses of worship should express views. Black Protestants are more divided, with 51 percent saying that churches should speak out while 43 percent say churches should stay clear of social and political issues. Majorities of religiously unaffiliated, Catholics and white mainline Protestants say churches should keep out of political matters.

Legally, Walker said, pastors are free to interpret and apply Scripture as they see fit, speak out on the great moral and ethical issues of the day, and urge good citizenship practices.

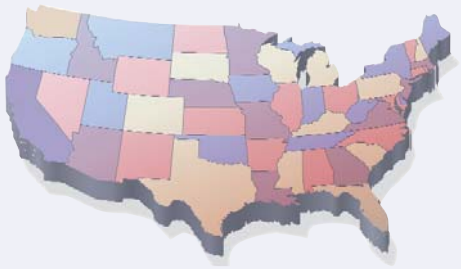
"One thing they can't do in exchange for the most favored tax exempt status is tell the faithful how to vote," Walker said.

The 2012 poll suggested that more respondents consider the Republican Party as friendly to religion compared to the Democratic Party, a trend that the Pew report says has existed for the past decade. Fifty-four percent considered the Republican Party as friendly to religion compared with 35 percent for Democrats.

The polling numbers on President Barack Obama's friendliness toward religion largely have stayed the same in the past few years. In 2012, 39 percent of respondents consider Obama friendly toward religion, 32 percent consider him neutral and 23 percent against. The only one of these numbers that is remarkably different from an August 2009 survey is the percentage of respondents who believed the president was unfriendly toward religion. In 2009, 17 percent thought so.

—Staff Reports

Anti-Sharia movement loses steam in state legislatures



At this point in 2011, 22 state legislatures had either passed or were considering bills to prohibit judges from considering either Islamic law, known as Sharia, or foreign law in their decisions.

What a difference a year can make.

The wave of anti-Sharia legislation has broken in recent weeks, as bills in several states have either died or been withdrawn, raising questions about whether the anti-Sharia movement has lost its momentum.

In Oklahoma, voters passed a constitutional amendment in 2010 that would prohibit state judges from considering foreign laws, including religious laws, in their decisions. The amendment was ruled unconstitutional by two federal courts, so lawmakers crafted a revised version. The bill passed the state House of Representatives last year, but the Senate Rules Committee did not hear the bill until recently. The committee voted down the bill April 5 with a 9-6 vote.

New Jersey Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi and Minnesota state Sen. David Thompson, both Republicans, withdrew anti-foreign law bills after Muslim and interfaith leaders criticized the measures as anti-Muslim.

"It was never meant to be an anti-Shariah law bill, it was meant to be an anti-foreign law bill," Schepisi said in an interview, speaking about the bill she withdrew March 12. "But after sitting down with members of the Muslim community, and taking into consideration everything they'd been through in the last few weeks, I didn't want to create any more tension."

New Jersey Muslims have rallied in recent weeks against a surveillance program of Muslim businesses and community centers in Newark and elsewhere conducted by the New York Police Department.

Thompson, too, had a change of heart.

"It was never my intent to introduce legislation that was being targeted to any one group," said a statement from Thompson, who submitted his proposal on March 2, but withdrew it three days later after interfaith leaders criticized him at a press conference.

According to *Gavel to Gavel*, an online newsletter that tracks state laws affecting courts, similar bills have also recently died or are likely to die in Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi and New Mexico, although at least a few of them could be revived next year.

Last year, anti-foreign law bills died in the Arkansas, Maine, Texas and Wyoming legislatures, and were not revived this year, according to *Gavel to Gavel*.

"There really wasn't much time or interest in discussing this," said John Schorg, a spokesman for Indiana's House Democrats.

While the anti-Sharia movement may be losing momentum, it certainly hasn't gone away. On March 12, South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed an anti-foreign law bill, joining Arizona, Louisiana and Tennessee in passing such laws.

And in Florida, Democratic state Sen. Nan Rich, the minority leader, acknowledged that practicality, not principles, is what undid the anti-foreign law bill there.

"I wish I could say it died because of an anti anti-Shariah law effort, but unfortunately I think it more came down to the crunch of bills in the last week of (the legislative) session," Rich said.

While Democrats and some moderate Republicans opposed the bill, most Republicans — including Senate President Mike Haridopolos, who did not reply to requests for comment — favored the bill.

"I doubt we could have stopped the bill if it came to a vote," said Rich.

At the moment, anti-foreign law bills are alive in 12 states.

At the federal level, Rep. Sandy Adams, R-Fla., introduced a bill last year limiting judges from considering foreign laws in their decisions, although it has gained little traction since then.

But even in states where the legislation is still alive, anti-Sharia advocates are facing increased criticism. For example, the Philadelphia City Council in February passed a resolution condemning an anti-Sharia proposal being considered in Pennsylvania's state legislature. The Virginia legislature moved a vote on the issue to 2013, a move that some observers said showed wariness about the legislation.

In New Jersey, Republican Gov. Chris Christie pounced on critics last year who said he was allowing Sharia into American courts after he appointed a Muslim judge to the state's Superior Court.

"This Sharia law business is crap," Christie said in his signature blunt style. "It's just crazy. And I'm tired of dealing with the crazies."

Sentiments are changing among the electorate, too. According to a February survey by the Washington-based Public Religion Research Institute, 14 percent of Americans said they believed Muslims wanted to impose Sharia in America, down from 30 percent in September.

The anti-Sharia law bills have been undermined mainly by three arguments: that they are discriminatory against Muslims; that they could affect other religious groups such as Jews and Catholics whose religious laws are sometimes used by judges to decide family or property law disputes; and that they could discourage business by invalidating foreign business laws.

"This is aimed at the Muslim community, but it affects all religions," Rich said.

Despite staving-off anti-Sharia bills this year, at least a few legislators expect to face the same battle again next year.

"As long as there are true believers who see this unfounded menace, they're going to look for ways to attack it," said state Rep. Stacey Abrams, the Democratic leader in the Georgia House of Representatives. "But I don't think that we as a state are inclined to be that xenophobic."

Rich was similarly resigned, but also optimistic.

"This bill will be back next year, unfortunately," said Rich. "But maybe by next year, hopefully, people will be more educated about this."

—Omar Sacirbey, Religion News Service

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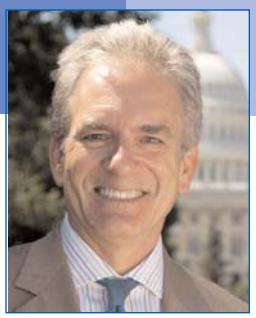

J. Brent Walker
Executive Director

The will of the majority and the rights of the minority

President Barack Obama's recent remarks about "unelected judges" thwarting the will of the elected political branches provides an opportunity to think about several fundaments of our democratic form of government and how best to protect religious liberty.

After teaching constitutional law for 10 years at the University of Chicago, the president knows better than to impugn the right of the judiciary to declare acts of their legislature unconstitutional. This has been settled law going all the way back to *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) in which Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall articulated the concept of judicial review and declared the judiciary to be the final arbiter of what the law is. Moreover, in the chapter titled "Our Constitution" in his book *The Audacity of Hope*, Obama makes clear his mature understanding of the nuances of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The president's clarification the next day — that he was talking about the Court's decision in the 2010 Affordable Care Act case, not challenging the doctrine of judicial review across the board — was appropriate and helpful. Although one could argue the propriety of the president commenting on a pending case, one cannot be surprised that he thinks the Court should not strike down his administration's signature legislative effort which his Justice Department vigorously defended before the Court.

Still, this flap provides a good opportunity to think some more about core issues of our democracy.

First, how in a democracy do we square the will of the majority with the rights of the minority? How do we resolve the tension between a fundamentally majoritarian Constitution with an essentially counter-majoritarian Bill of Rights? Yes, most of our elections and policy decisions are made by majority vote. But the rights listed in the Bill of Rights, as former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor reminded us, have been withdrawn from the "vicissitudes of political controversy" and "depend on the outcome of no elections." Pure majoritarianism can become as tyrannical as rank totalitarianism. And it **is** the province of the unelected judiciary to interpret the Constitution and its Bill of Rights and to protect the rights of the minority, even against the will of an overwhelming majority.

This counter-majoritarian understanding of the protections for religious freedom in particular should motivate the Court to robustly enforce both religion clauses in the First Amendment. If either clause is collapsed into the other, or if both are watered down into a muddled majoritarianism, religious liberty suffers.

Second, attempts on the part of courts to apply the Bill of Rights and to enforce counter-majoritarian values often engender cries of so-called "judicial activism." For the past 50 to 60 years, opposition to judicial activism has been the calling card of the conservative side of the political spectrum. They point to a variety of Supreme Court decisions, including ones striking state-sponsored school prayer, upholding abortion rights, and protecting unpopular forms of speech, such as flag burning.

But, more recently, the critique of judicial activism has sometimes come from the more liberal side of the spectrum. Republican presidents who campaigned against judicial activism appointed 12 justices to the Supreme Court between 1969 and 2008. But, as liberals point out, the Rehnquist and Roberts Courts have struck down 46 federal laws over the past two decades compared with fewer than 130 during the first two centuries of the Supreme Court's existence. This, of course, includes the Court striking down parts of the landmark Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, an all-important law needed to buttress the free exercise of religion.

The lesson we should all learn is to be careful, those on the left and on the right, about charges of judicial activism. No, the Court should not strike down laws of Congress and other legislatures lightly and without much study and discretion. However, when elected branches pass or enforce laws that transgress constitutional rights, including protections for minority rights, the courts must act to take up their mandate to correct the error.

No one complains about judicial activism when they agree with what the Court has done. As someone once quipped, "If the Court makes a decision that you like, it's applauded as judicial statesmanship. If you don't like it, it is called judicial activism."

The counter-majoritarian understanding of the Bill of Rights and questions of judicial activism go to the very heart of our quest to ensure religious liberty for all through the protections afforded in the religion clauses of the First Amendment. If the Court fails rigorously to enforce these clauses in a counter-majoritarian way or falls into the stupor of judicial **in**activity, the First Amendment will not do its intended work of ensuring religious freedom for all.

Religious free
in the workplac

By Nan Futrell
BJC Staff Counsel

This month, the BJC was invited to speak via Skype to members of the First Baptist Church of Tallahassee, Fla., who have recently organized a church initiative called WorkFaith. The group, which meets monthly for lunch hour discussion and devotion, is part of a larger movement seeking to equip Christians to apply their faith in the workplace. This "faith at work" movement is a response to a growing need for information and education about ways to prioritize service to God in the employment context while fulfilling secular job duties and respecting the rights of others. An important component of such education efforts is understanding legal parameters of religion in the workplace. As with other issues in Christian life, there are many perspectives about how our faith should be integrated into our professional lives, but there is general consensus about the ways the law both facilitates and limits workplace ministry.

As an initial matter, the law does not say that the workplace is a "religion-free" zone or that employees must check their faith at the door. In many instances, the law confers a right to engage in religious speech and expression on the job. At the same time, the law recognizes that we live in a pluralistic society, and this is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the workplace.

In general, the employment laws applicable to religious expression exist to prevent discriminatory conduct by or against employees. The crux of the law on religion in the workplace is respect. Fortunately, this is consistent with the Christian tradition, which calls followers to live out their faith in every aspect of daily life, including work, while respecting those who hold different values or subscribe to different belief systems. This does not mean faith has no place in employment, but it does command respect for certain legal boundaries and the rights of others.

Protection of religion in the workplace is part of our country's religious liberty tradition. Any discussion of religious liberty begins with the First Amendment's religion clauses, which apply to the relationship between citizens and the government. In general, the Establishment Clause prohibits the government from promoting, sponsoring or endorsing religion. The Free Exercise Clause protects against government interference in religion. Along with the Free Speech Clause, the religion clauses limit the government's role in religious choices and practices of individuals and faith communities. In the employment setting, these constitutional principles impose special duties on government employers and employees.

The major source of generally applicable employment law is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII is the federal statute that prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of protected categories such as race, color, sex, national origin or religion. It applies to all employers, government and private, with 15 or more employees. Under Title VII, employers cannot make religion a condition or requirement in any aspect of employment, including hiring, firing, or other aspects such as promotion, job assignments, discipline or benefits. Title VII also requires employers to reasonably accommodate employees' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices unless doing so would result in an undue hardship for the employer. The undue hardship standard has been interpreted as anything more than minimal costs. Some considerations include whether a requested accommodation interferes with an employee's work duties, infringes on the rights of others, or impairs workplace safety. Additionally, an employer is not required to accommodate employee conduct that could create a hostile work environment or that constitutes harassment of other employees. Still, there are many instances in which an employee's need for an accommodation can be easily met. Some common methods of accommodation include scheduling changes, such as permitting an employee to swap shifts in order to attend a religious worship service, or making an exception to general grooming or dress rules to allow an employee to wear a head covering for religious reasons. In addition to Title VII, state and local laws provide similar, and often stronger, protections against workplace discrimination.

Many employees' sincerely held religious beliefs may compel them to share their faith with others, and the Title VII duty to accommodate applies to workplace proselytizing as well — subject to the same limitations as other religiously-motivated conduct. Workplace ministry can present a challenge for employers, who have a duty to accommodate employee religious practices but must also ensure that any proselytizing does not amount to religious harassment of others. Further, government employers must be sensitive to the Establishment Clause concerns that arise when an employee's proselytizing could be reasonably perceived as expressing the government's own views. The U.S. Supreme Court has said that when government employees speak in their official capacity as government representatives, their speech belongs to the government and can be limited to comply with Establishment Clause requirements. Some government

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employees interact frequently with members of the general public, often providing services that citizens cannot obtain anywhere else. In this setting, it is much more likely that the public will attribute what these employees say and do to the government itself. Thus, if employees use the role of public servant to evangelize, it is likely to be perceived as government promotion of religion — the very thing the Establishment Clause exists to prevent.

The Establishment Clause does not, however, affect the rights of government employees when they speak as purely private individuals. And a government employee does not necessarily speak in an official capacity during all hours of the workday. In these instances, Title VII principles apply, and an employer should accommodate its employee's religious conduct insofar as it does not cause undue hardship, is not disruptive and does not amount to harassment. Generally speaking, government employers have greater flexibility to accommodate employees' efforts to proselytize when members of the public are not involved. The Federal Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Workplace, in place since 1997, provide additional useful guidance in the context of federal employment. They have often served as a model for state and local government policy and even for private employers (although the latter are not bound by the Establishment Clause).

Whenever employees seek to express their religion in the workplace, it is helpful to do so with an understanding of the respective rights and responsibilities of employers and employees. While every professional environment is unique, awareness of these basic boundaries can render many conflicts avoidable.

For more information

on religious freedom in the workplace and other issues regarding religion and the law, check out **Religious Expression in American Public Life: A Joint Statement of Current Law**

In 2010, a diverse group of participants, including the Baptist Joint Committee, released **Religious Expression in American Public Life: A Joint Statement of Current Law**. It provides detailed answers to 35 questions on issues relating to religion in the public square, and it is available on the website of the Wake Forest University Divinity School's Center for Religion and Public Affairs at **http://divinity.wfu.edu/religion-and-public-affairs/**.

May employees express and exercise their faith within secular nongovernmental workplaces?

... [A]n employer is required to accommodate the religious practices of its employees unless such accommodation would cause the employer undue hardship. An employer, therefore, sometimes must accommodate religious practice even if the employer does not have to accommodate similar nonreligious practice. For example, if an employer prohibits the wearing of hats in the workplace, it still might be required to accommodate an employee's need to wear a head covering at work for religious reasons. Also, if a nongovernmental secular employer permits employees to engage in nonreligious types of personal expression at work, it usually must permit employees to engage in personal religious expression as well. ... For example, as a general matter, employees who wish to keep a devotional book at their desks must be permitted to do so if other employees are permitted to keep novels, self-help books or other non-work-related books at their desks. ...

Do these same civil rights rules regarding religious accommodation, discrimination and harassment also apply to the governmental workplace? And are there special rules regarding religion that apply only to governmental workplaces?

The same civil rights laws that apply to the nongovernmental workplace also typically apply to the governmental workplace, but government employers also must comply with federal and state constitutional rules and other laws that apply only to governmental bodies. In some cases, these constitutional rules will modify the application of the relevant civil rights laws to the government workplace. And, in every case, these constitutional rules add another layer of law to consider. The Supreme Court has held that government employees do not enjoy free speech rights regarding expression that is part of their job duties. Thus, the government may restrict personal speech, including religious or anti-religious speech, which is understood to be part of an employee's work responsibilities. ... At the same time, however, "[t]he Court has made clear that [governmental] employees do not surrender all their First Amendment rights by reason of their employment." ...

K. Hollyn Hollman
General Counsel

Conscience, contraception and conflict over religious freedom

The constitutional challenge to the Affordable Care Act is clearly the biggest story in the ongoing national health care debate. A significant subplot, however, is the implementation of rules requiring contraception coverage in health insurance plans as applied to objecting religious employers. This issue, described by some as evidence of a war on religious freedom, left the front pages after the Obama administration announced broader accommodations for religious institutions in early February. Still, some controversy continues.

As some opponents of the Obama administration's contraception mandate claim a religious freedom crisis, others worry that religious accommodations threaten an important aspect of preventive health benefits. As the BJC monitors this issue in an effort to protect religious freedom for all, here are some things to keep in mind.

1) Though this debate may be politicized, there are important substantive concerns on both sides to recognize. There is widespread consensus among medical experts that contraception is an essential component of comprehensive preventive health care for women, who comprise 47 percent of the American workforce. Availability of preventive services, including contraception, lowers overall health care costs, rates of unwanted pregnancy, and risks associated with medical conditions unrelated to reproduction. At the same time, some employers have sincere religious objections to contraception and therefore understandably oppose providing it for their employees. For these employers, the mandate is a fundamental matter of religious liberty.

2) Broadly speaking, our country's commitment to religious liberty means protecting the rights of individuals and faith communities to believe and practice their religion as they see fit, while keeping the government from advancing or inhibiting religion. Of course, conflicts arise between religious freedom claims and other valid governmental interests. While religious liberty is among our most cherished constitutional guarantees, religiously motivated objections to laws do not automatically override them.

3) Context matters. The First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act provide a legal framework to resolve conflicts between religious liberty rights and other governmental interests. The proper analysis weighs the extent of the burden on religion, the governmental interests at stake and the available means of reconciling competing concerns. In the example of the contraceptive mandate, the goal should be accommodating conscience objections without harming the rights of third parties — namely, women employees who desire coverage.

4) The size and complexity of the health care legislation make this contraception issue especially difficult. Persuasive analogies are hard to come by, and uncertainty remains about the implementation of health care reform in general. Aspects of the law are pending in the U.S. Supreme Court, including the question of severability — if one part of the law is found unconstitutional, whether the rest remains or falls with it.

5) Implementation of health care law depends on the regulatory rulemaking process, which is still underway. In March, the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) issued an "Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule-Making." The administration explained its desire to accommodate nonprofit religious organizations' religious objections to providing contraception coverage while assuring that employees of such organizations receive coverage without cost-sharing. HHS invited comments from stakeholders to develop alternative ways of meeting these goals, specifically acknowledging concerns about self-insured employers, the interplay between existing state laws and federal regulations and conscience claims that arise only with respect to certain methods of contraception.

6) Some opponents will proceed with litigation challenging the mandate on constitutional and statutory grounds, regardless of efforts to accommodate conscience objections. Since November 2011, at least nine lawsuits have been filed, including several brought after the expanded accommodation was announced in February. The plaintiffs in these cases represent various perspectives: religiously affiliated colleges and universities, both Catholic and Protestant; a religious broadcasting network; a pro-life Catholic nonprofit organization; attorneys general from several states; and a private business owner.

These observations illustrate the intricate and evolving nature of this issue. We do not always get the church-state balance right in this country. Doing so requires sensitivity to diverse claims, hard work and smart advocacy. Our legal system's willingness to accommodate religion without advancing it is an important hallmark of our commitment to religious liberty. When it comes to health care — and any other political debate — that commitment must prevail.

'Ten Commandments Judge' Roy Moore poised to return to Ala. court

Roy Moore held on to 51 percent of the Republican primary vote March 13 in his bid to retake his former job as chief justice of Alabama.

After 98 percent of the precincts were counted, Moore received 279,381 votes to Mobile Judge Charlie Graddick's 139,673 votes (25 percent), and incumbent Chief Justice Chuck Malone's 136,050 votes (24 percent).

Moore is hoping to regain a position he lost in 2003 when a state panel expelled him from office for failing to comply with a federal court order to remove a 5,280-pound granite monument to the Ten Commandments that he had placed in the Alabama Judicial Building in Montgomery.

Moore argued — and continues to maintain — that he had a right to acknowledge God and that following the order would have been a violation of his oath to the Constitution. At the urging of Alabama clergy from various denominations, the BJC filed a brief opposing Moore's famous Ten Commandments monument. For many defenders of religious liberty, the display was an affront to the constitutional values that benefit all religions. Allowing it would place the government in the position of selecting and advancing favored religious practices and beliefs, violating the government neutrality toward religion guaranteed by the First Amendment.

After his expulsion from office, Moore mounted unsuccessful campaigns for governor in 2006 and 2010.

Moore, 65, is now poised to win his old job back despite getting badly outspent by his two GOP opponents. "That should tell you something," he said, giving credit to God.

Malone, the incumbent chief justice, said he believes Moore had an advantage since he could devote his full attention to campaigning while the other candidates have full-time jobs.

"I knew (Moore) would do well," Malone said. "He's run five times statewide. I know name recognition has a lot to do with it."

Attorney Harry Lyon is running as the Democratic candidate for chief justice. Several individuals have put their names forward as write-in candidates. Voters will decide in November, but the GOP winner is widely expected to be the favorite.

In an attempt to sidestep any lingering controversy over the Ten Commandments monument, Moore promised repeatedly throughout this campaign that he would not try to bring it back if elected.

On the campaign trail, Moore also downplayed his open defiance with the federal court that ordered the monument removed.

"I can't envision a set of circumstances or an order that would cause me to be in conflict with a higher court," he said. "This is the only conflict I've had with a higher court, and I can't envision another conflict."

— Debbie M. Lord and Brendan Kirby, writers for The Press-Register *in Mobile, Ala., and Religion News Service. BJC staff also contributed to this article.*

Two new religious freedom council picks criticized

Two new commissioners appointed to an independent panel that advises the State Department on international religious freedom violations are drawing criticism for holding views described as out of the mainstream.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., picked Zuhdi Jasser, president and founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, for his choice as a commissioner on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a bipartisan panel appointed by leadership of both houses of Congress and the White House.

Jasser fills a slot vacated by Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, who was ineligible for reappointment due to newly imposed term limits.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations described Jasser as a "mere sock puppet for Islam haters and an enabler of Islamophobia." More than 1,800 people have signed a petition asking McConnell to "reconsider" his appointment.

Jasser, a physician in Phoenix, Ariz., and president of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, has angered many Muslim Americans for his work with groups they say demonize Muslims and for supporting policies that they say infringe on their civil liberties.

Jasser narrated "The Third Jihad," a documentary widely considered to be Islamophobic. He has also defended the New York City Police Department against attacks that it spied on Muslims, and he testified on Capitol Hill on the problem of Muslim "extremism" in the U.S.

Another new USCIRF member, appointed by House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, is Princeton University professor Robert George, who has faced questions about his own ties to anti-Muslim organizations.

George, a Catholic, is also co-author, with Southern Baptists Timothy George and Chuck Colson, of the Manhattan Declaration, a 2009 document that has recently drawn attention for comparisons to a historic declaration by church leaders opposed to Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

With Land's departure, the commission's only remaining Baptist is William Shaw, immediate past president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., and pastor of White Rock Baptist Church in Philadelphia, appointed by President Barack Obama.

The newest member of USCIRF at press time was Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett. Nominated March 28 by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., Lantos Swett is president and CEO of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights, and she teaches human rights and American foreign policy at Tufts University.

At press time for *Report from the Capital*, there were two remaining vacant positions yet to be filled.

—Associated Baptist Press, Religion News Service, & Staff Reports

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REPORT from the Capital

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Get your tickets today for the 2012 Religious Liberty Council Luncheon

This year's Religious Liberty Council Luncheon is only two months away! Tickets are now available for the annual event, which brings supporters and friends of the Baptist Joint Committee together in one room.

Religious Liberty Council Luncheon
Friday, June 22
11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.
Omni Fort Worth Hotel
Texas Ballroom F
Fort Worth, Texas

The event is held in conjunction with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly. The luncheon is open to the public, but you must have a ticket to attend. Tickets are $40 each. You can buy individual tickets or purchase a table of 10 for $400.

If you cannot make it to Fort Worth, you can still be part of the luncheon. You can sponsor a table in honor of your church or favorite college or seminary and encourage others to attend. Or, you can purchase a ticket that we will give to a seminary student who would be unable to attend otherwise.

Purchase tickets for the luncheon by check or credit card. Simply call our office at 202-544-4226 or visit our secure website at **www.BJConline.org/store**. If you have questions, please contact Cherilyn Crowe at ccrowe@BJConline.org.

This year's keynote speaker is Bill J. Leonard, who was recently named the James and Marilyn Dunn Chair of Baptist Studies at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity. Leonard is a scholar of church history and an ordained Baptist minister. He has dedicated much of his career to the study of Baptist history and was the founding dean of the Wake Forest University School of Divinity. After retiring as dean in 2010, he has continued to teach church history at Wake Forest. Leonard will also receive the BJC's highest honor — the J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award — at the event.


Leonard

The Religious Liberty Council luncheon is an opportunity for you to fellowship with other BJC supporters, hear a compelling religious liberty message, meet seminary students and hear from BJC staff and board members. Visit **www.BJConline.org/luncheon** for more information.