

REPORT

from the Capital

BJC asks Department of Education to protect student religious expression

The Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty wants to make sure a provision of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (“ARRA,” also called the “stimulus package” passed by Congress in February) is implemented the way it is intended — to both prevent public money from going to solely religious structures and to protect individual students’ freedom of religious expression in public institutions of higher education.

On May 12, the Baptist Joint Committee joined the American Jewish Congress in sending a letter to the Department of Education to share its concerns. The two groups want the Department to offer guidance on section §14004(c)(3)(A)(B) of the stimulus package to make sure organizations do not misinterpret the language to violate the religious freedom rights of students on college and university campuses.

The provision says that no funds granted under the Act may be used for the “modernization, renovation, or repair of facilities” that are “used for sectarian instruction or religious worship” or “in which a substantial portion of the functions of the facilities are subsumed in a religious mission.”

There has been much confusion about what this provision actually means. During the Congressional debate, Sen. Jim DeMint, R – S.C., misinterpreted the language to mean students would be prohibited from having a Bible study in a dorm if that dorm had been repaired with the government’s stimulus money.

The joint letter to the Department of Education says the groups are “confident...that this was not Congress’ intention.” Guidance about the proper implementation of the provision will “help avoid conflicts that the Congressional debate brought to light.”

The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the importance of a restriction against government grants for buildings used only for religious purposes in the 1971 case *Tilton v. Richardson*. In its decision, the Court ruled the

conversion of a government-funded building to a chapel or other structure that is solely religious would violate the Establishment Clause prohibition on supporting religion. In that same decision, the Court upheld the constitutionality of government construction grants to religiously affiliated colleges.

The stimulus package language reflects the Court’s ruling in *Tilton* and does not prevent individual religious activity in public college and university facilities. The language is actually a protection of religious liberty, ensuring the public’s funds are not used in an unconstitutional manner to advance religion. The letter says, “The claim that student-led religious clubs will be barred from utilizing school facilities refurbished with ARRA monies ignores the line of Supreme Court cases that has upheld student-sponsored religious speech against any Establishment Clause claims.” It goes on to say the Supreme Court has found such religious speech “constitutionally protected” in the face of arguments that such prayer in public places establishes religion.

The joint letter reminds the Department that, in the past, some schools were overly cautious about violating the Establishment Clause and barred students from gathering on their own for prayer on school premises. Supreme Court decisions in *Widmar v. Vincent* (1981) and *Westside School District v. Mergens* (1990) make it “abundantly clear that the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause does not deprive religious groups of the same access to public school facilities as secular counterparts.”

The BJC asserts that a clear set of guidelines would ensure schools do not trample on their students’ rights to religious freedom in an attempt to stay within the boundaries of the funding provision. Guidance from the Department would correct misinterpretations of this element of the stimulus package while preventing public monies from subsidizing religious activities.

— Staff Reports

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Obama picks Sotomayor for Supreme Court

WASHINGTON — On May 26, President Barack Obama announced the nomination of U.S. Circuit Judge Sonia Sotomayor to replace retiring U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice David Souter.

If confirmed by the Senate, Sotomayor would be the first Latina — and only the third woman — to serve on the nation's highest court. Sotomayor would also be one of six Catholics on the Supreme Court. Souter and Justice John Paul Stevens are the only Protestants currently on the panel, which also contains five Catholics and two Jews.

At deadline for *Report from the Capital*, the Baptist Joint Committee's legal staff was reviewing Sotomayor's record on cases involving religious liberty. Despite her extensive tenure on the bench for both



Photo: White House / Pete Souza

U.S. Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor speaks with President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden on the day of her nomination.

the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and a New York City-based federal district court, Sotomayor ruled on only a handful of cases involving the First Amendment's two religion clauses.

The BJC looks forward to learning more about Judge Sotomayor through her written legal opinions, and, if approved, hopes she will rule on religion issues in a fashion similar to the justice she would replace.

A comprehensive review of Sotomayor's church-state record by the BJC staff is forthcoming. For more on Justice David Souter's record on religious liberty, see Brent Walker's piece on page 4 of this edition of *Report from the Capital*.

— *Associated Baptist Press & BJC Staff Reports*

National day of prayer stirs controversy

WASHINGTON — Conservative organizers of National Day of Prayer-related events expressed disappointment that President Barack Obama chose not to mark the day in the same elaborate fashion as his predecessor. But some groups that support strong church-state separation applauded Obama for pulling back from the emphasis that President George W. Bush placed on the event.

Many religious right leaders have roundly criticized Obama for choosing not to observe the day with any sort of White House ceremony. "We are disappointed at the lack of emphasis on prayer on this National Day of Prayer," said James Dobson in a Capitol Hill press conference with members of Congress to mark the event on May 7.

Shortly after the Capitol Hill gathering concluded, Obama did issue the traditional proclamation marking the day. Part of his statement read, "As we observe this day of prayer, we remember the one law that binds all great religions together: the Golden Rule, and its call to love one another; to understand one another; and to treat with dignity and respect those with whom we share a brief moment on this Earth."

Presidents since Harry Truman have declared a similar day calling on Americans of faith to humble themselves, give thanks and pray for the good of the nation and the

world. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs was asked about the National Day of Prayer in his regular May 6 press briefing. "Prayer is something that the president does every day," he said.

One Baptist leader said that he thought the entire enterprise was "misguided."

Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, said in a May 5 post on the Washington Post/Newsweek "On Faith" blog, that it is not "government's job to tell the American people what, where or when to pray. Although most presidents have issued prayer proclamations, two of the most ardent supporters of religious freedom, Thomas Jefferson — author of the Virginia Bill Establishing Religious Freedom — and James Madison — father of the Constitution — opposed them."

Walker concluded: "Exhorting our country to repentance and prayer is altogether proper. Who would argue we

don't need it? But it's more appropriately called for by the preachers, priests and prophets among us — not civil magistrates, the Congress or even an American president."

— *Rob Marus / Associated Baptist Press*



Photo: White House / Pete Souza

President Obama signs the proclamation marking the National Day of Prayer with faith advisor Joshua DuBois.

Oklahoma governor signs Ten Commandments bill

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma's governor ignored pleas of fellow Baptists to veto a measure authorizing erection of a Ten Commandments monument on the state Capitol grounds.

Gov. Brad Henry signed HB1330 without comment May 18, clearing the way for a privately funded monument recognizing the Ten Commandments' influence on America's legal system and society.

Groups including Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty had both encouraged Henry, a member of First Baptist Church in Shawnee, Okla., to veto the bill on the principle of separation of church and state.

"We should be more concerned with following the Ten Commandments rather than merely posting them on government property," said Baptist Joint Committee General Counsel K. Hollyn Hollman. "Religion flourishes best when the separation of church and state is protected."

The bill, modeled after a display in Texas the U.S. Supreme Court ruled constitutional in 2005, passed both houses of the legislature by veto-proof margins. The bill's sponsor, House member Mike Ritze, indicated his family would pay for placement and upkeep of the monument.

Ritze, a physician and long-time member of Arrow

Heights Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Broken Arrow, Okla., told media the text used for the monument would be the King James Version, because "it is the easiest to understand."

Henry's church, where he has served as both a Sunday school teacher and deacon, is affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The governor is scheduled to deliver a testimony at the New Baptist Covenant Midwest Region gathering Aug. 6-7 in Norman, Okla.

The Ten Commandments law, which takes effect Nov. 1, specifies that placement of the monument "shall not be construed to mean that the State of Oklahoma favors any particular religion or denomination thereof over others, but rather will be placed on the Capitol grounds where there are numerous other monuments."

It says the Ten Commandments are "an important component of the foundation of the laws and legal system of the United States of America and of the State of Oklahoma," that "courts of the United States of America and of various states frequently cite the Ten Commandments in published decisions" and "acknowledgements of the role played by the Ten Commandments in our nation's heritage are common throughout America."

—Bob Allen / Associated Baptist Press

"We should be more concerned with following the Ten Commandments rather than merely posting them on government property."

— BJC General Counsel
Holly Hollman

State legislature update



State legislatures dealt with a number of bills affecting the relationship between church and state just before the beginning of summer.

Florida: Religious License Plates

Efforts in the state legislature to create two different Florida license plates with religious themes made headlines before failing in early May. One proposed plate contained an image of a crucified Jesus, and the other had a stained glass window and cross.

Hawaii: Islam Day

Hawaii's legislature passed a resolution proclaiming September 24 as Islam Day to recognize the contributions of Islam and the Islamic world. The resolution attracted worldwide attention and caused controversy over whether it was in violation of the Establishment Clause.

Louisiana: Religious Freedom Amendment

The Louisiana house passed a bill in May calling for a state constitutional amendment to expand Louisiana's religious freedom protections. It would add language saying every person has the right to "engage in or refrain from

activity" based on religious belief and no one "shall burden the free exercise of religion." If the senate

approves it, the amendment goes to the voters in 2010.

Oregon: Workplace Religious Freedom

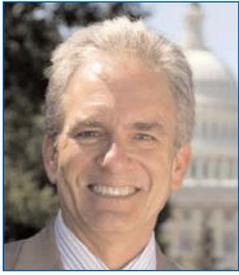
The Oregon Workplace Religious Freedom Act passed the state legislature at the end of May. The bill requires employers to provide accommodation for religious beliefs if there is no "undue hardship" on the business.

Tennessee: Church License Plates

The Tennessee attorney general ruled that a proposed specialty license plate for the Church of God in Christ would likely violate both the state and federal constitutional provisions against the establishment of religion. The bill was deferred until 2010.

If you have a question about the potential religious liberty implications of a bill in your state, the BJC is a resource for you.

—Cherilyn Crowe



J. Brent Walker
Executive Director

Souter's tenure on the Supreme Court

Reflections on the retiring justice's religious freedom record

Let me begin this retrospective on the 19-year court tenure of Justice David Souter by returning to an earlier prognostication. In November 1990, after Justice Souter's confirmation and on the eve of his service on the U.S. Supreme Court, I wrote the following in *Report from the Capital*:

Judge Souter's position on First Amendment issues becomes critically important as this new, conservative-leaning, philosophically-statist Court moves into the 1990's. We cannot expect Judge Souter to fill William Brennan's strong leadership role in church-state cases, at least not immediately. However, one hopes that Judge Souter's voting record will be as good as Brennan's and that in time he will be able to steer the Court in the direction that will restore our 'first liberty' to the constitutional pre-eminence that it deserves.

As one whose predictions are often wrong, I think I can boast some reasonable accuracy in this one about Justice Souter's church-state record. Of course, how Justice Souter would perform on the Court was not entirely clear at the time of his nomination. His tenure as a justice on the New Hampshire Supreme Court and brief service on a Federal appeals court revealed only a meager record on church and state. However, his Senate Judiciary Committee hearing incorporated promising testimony about his understanding of the First Amendment's religion clauses and how he would interpret them on the High Court.

Although it is debatable whether Justice Souter ever matched the stature of Justice Brennan (who served 34 years) in his political savvy and ability to cobble together five-vote judicial majorities, Justice Souter's church-state jurisprudence on the merits proved to be on target and very close to what the Baptist Joint Committee argued before the Court in the 20 church-state cases in which he participated.

Space does not permit a full-scale analysis of the corpus of Justice Souter's work, even when limited to church and state. However, his opinions in two early cases sketched out his thinking about both the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause in a way that anticipated and

informed his decision making throughout the remainder of his tenure on the Court.

During Justice Souter's second term, the Court decided *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577 (1992), the Rhode Island middle school graduation prayer case. The Court ruled that prayer delivered by a Jewish rabbi at the school-sponsored graduation ceremony violated the Establishment Clause. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the majority opinion for a divided Court, and Justice Souter offered a concurring opinion in which Justice John Paul Stevens and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor joined.

Although agreeing with the Court's opinion, Justice Souter wrote separately to make clear his understanding that the Establishment Clause bars favoring religion over irreligion, not just promoting one particular religion over others. Similarly, he opined that actual coercion of religious practice was not a necessary element of an Establishment Clause violation, and that a general endorsement of religion by government would be sufficient. In unpacking his understanding of the Establishment Clause, Justice Souter appealed to the language of the amendment itself, Court precedent and his perception of the intent of the framers, particularly James Madison.

Justice Souter went on to warn that his embrace of a robust Establishment Clause should not be read to indicate a lack of appreciation for a strong Free Exercise Clause. Thus, he was careful to point out that, just because "government must remain neutral in matters of religion does not foreclose it from ever taking religion into account. The state may 'accommodate' the free exercise of religion by relieving people from generally applicable rules that interfere with their religious callings."

The next term, in the *Church of the Lukumi Babalú Aye v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520 (1993), Justice Souter set forth, in a more complete fashion, his understanding of the Free Exercise Clause. In *Lukumi*, the Court ruled unanimously, again with Justice Kennedy writing the opinion, that a governmental targeting of religion for discriminatory treatment — a religion-specific ban on animal sacrifice — violated the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause. Justice Souter filed a concurring opinion that criticized a case decided by the Court three years earlier in *Employment Division v. Smith*. There, a narrow Court majority essentially gutted the Free Exercise Clause by ruling that it did not

protect against generally applicable, facially neutral laws that indirectly burden the exercise of religion. Justice Souter's respect for Court precedent and his disinclination to decide a case more broadly than is needed caused him to refrain from seeking to overrule *Smith* in *Lukumi*. But he specifically called for a "reexamining of the *Smith* rule in the next case that would turn upon its application." Unfortunately for the sake of religious liberty, that occasion never presented itself.

The BJC applauded Justice Souter's analysis in both of these cases and in nearly every other opinion in the church-state field that he wrote. The only case in which the position of the BJC and the opinion of Justice Souter differed was *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, 533 U.S. 98 (2001). There we supported the Court's ruling that an adult-led, after school religious club meeting in an elementary school classroom did not violate the Establishment Clause. Justice Souter dissented saying that the precedent relied on by the Court majority, *Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District* (1993), did not apply. He reasoned that *Lamb's Chapel* simply approved the use of school property on weekends to present a variety of views about family issues, including from a religious standpoint, whereas in *Good News* it was "beyond question that Good News [Club] intends to use the public school premises not for the mere discussion of a subject from a particular, Christian point of view, but for an evangelical service of worship calling children to commitment themselves in an act of Christian conversion." Moreover, in further keeping with Justice Souter's nuanced approach to judging, he

would have remanded the case to a lower court to further develop the record before he would be comfortable deciding the Free Speech Clause and Establishment Clause issues in the case.

All of this is to say Justice Souter will be difficult to replace when it comes to church and state. More than any other justice, he has reflected the BJC's understanding of the proper interpretation of the religion clauses and how they apply to contemporary church-state issues. During his tenure, he has been an intellectual force arguing for a muscular understanding of the two clauses, but applying them in a way that respects precedent and judicial restraint. His careful, incremental and measured style in deciding cases is similar to that of Justice O'Connor — although his religion clauses jurisprudence was more predictable and genial to church-state separation. The best that we can hope for from Justice Souter's successor is for him or her to be a thoughtful, fair-minded, hard working jurist. After all, that is what Justice Souter has been for nearly two decades.

We shall miss him.



Brent Walker reflects on personal interactions with Justice David Souter



◆ I invited Justice Souter to speak to a BJC-sponsored gathering in the fall of 1994. Usually one gets a form letter from the justice's secretary if the invitation is declined. Justice Souter, however, sent a personally signed note saying that he was grateful for the invitation. Typical of Justice Souter's polite, deferential nature, he concluded "I will, however, have to ask you to excuse me, for I do not generally add speaking commitments to the work of the Court."

◆ Despite the popular understanding that Justice Souter is awfully quirky, terribly old-fashioned, and almost neurotically reclusive, the late Justice Harry Blackmun told James Dunn in a private conversation that "Justice Souter is the most normal person on the Supreme Court." I am not sure what Justice Blackmun meant by that. I think he may have meant that Justice Souter, unlike some of his colleagues, is a person of simple tastes and possesses a well-tempered ego.

◆ On Ash Wednesday in 1991, several staffers from the Baptist Joint Committee went to St. Mark's Episcopal Church, located just behind the Supreme Court, for noon-time worship. Justice Souter participated with us in that small group of worshippers. He was the only Supreme Court justice at St. Mark's. I thought it said a lot about his spiritual commitment, a topic that has not often been discussed.



K. Hollyn Hollman
General Counsel

Marriage and Religious Freedom

The BJC does not take a position on the legal status of same-sex unions. The increasingly frequent and intense claims linking gay rights and religious liberty, however, require attention. Charges that one's adversaries violate religious freedom or the separation of church and state do little to advance the debate over marriage rights. Instead, they often cause confusion about the constitutional protection of religious freedom in America.

For the BJC, promoting religious liberty for all means protecting the rights of individuals and faith communities to believe and practice their religion as they see fit and keeping the government from advancing or inhibiting religion. It is a fundamental value that deserves and enjoys broad support. Maintaining our large Baptist coalition to preserve the Baptist legacy of defending religious freedom is challenging enough; building a consensus on religious or public policy concerns beyond our core mission would be impossible.

On the question of who should receive the legal benefits of marriage, there is no single "religious freedom" answer. Admittedly, the fact that "marriage" has both a civil and a religious meaning complicates the discussion. Yet a state's determination about legal benefits to couples is similar to other policy questions about which religious individuals and communities disagree. The fact that the opinions of some advocates are grounded in church teachings may explain the passions that have been ignited, but it hardly suggests that one side holds a trump card.

The debate has been distorted by advocates on all sides. Some vocal opponents of same-sex marriage rely on the Bible to define marriage as between a man and a woman and oppose state recognition of same-sex couples because it legitimizes conduct they believe is immoral. Claiming to speak for the religious majority, they argue that the state's action violates their religious freedom. Yet, religious individuals and communities regularly challenge the morality of practices that are legal, including sex out of wedlock. Just because a law sparks moral objections does not mean that it violates the Free Exercise Clause.

On another side, some proponents of same-sex marriage claim that the separation of church and state should preclude the government from recognizing only traditional marriage. They reject laws defining marriage as between a man and a woman because they see them as based on religious teachings that they reject. But, just because a law – like

the prohibition on theft – happens to conform to the religious opinions of the majority does not mean that it violates the Establishment Clause.

Instead of making such broad and misleading claims, advocates for religious liberty on all sides of the marriage debate would be better served by trying to specify the interests at issue, the conflicts between competing rights, and possible ways of minimizing harm. Where and how are gay rights and religious liberty rights likely to clash?

First, there are concerns about the autonomy of houses of worship. Predictions about forced marriages and jailed clergy are misguided. The First Amendment ensures that faith traditions will continue to make their own decisions about the marriages they will perform regardless of the legal status of same-sex couples. Already, the government approves many marriages that churches do not, and churches impose requirements on marriage that the law does not. Likewise, freedom of speech ensures that pastors from across the theological spectrum will continue to speak freely in the pulpit on the basis of religious teachings, not legal prohibitions.

Second, and more difficult, there are concerns about the liberty of other institutions – such as schools and hospitals – organized by religious entities that oppose same-sex marriage. There have long been conflicts between legal protections based on sexual orientation and those based on religion, particularly in the employment and public services contexts. Whether religious exemptions should accompany laws providing greater protection to same-sex couples is a significant issue and legitimate ground for debate. Such exemptions, whether viewed as constitutionally mandated or simply permissible, protect the religious freedom interests of autonomy and self-definition. Depending on how they are crafted, they may well give all sides in the marriage debate most of what they want.

Perhaps it is not surprising that in the debates over legal rights for same-sex couples, many claim support from our country's proud tradition of protecting religious freedom. But it is important to recognize that supporters of religious freedom (and of the BJC) are on different sides of the debate. The BJC is following the debate closely, with our eyes focused on defending and extending religious freedom for all. Finding a way through the thicket of competing claims is difficult. We would all do well to remember this: the simple fact that a state's marriage laws conflict with certain religious beliefs while conforming to others does not by itself threaten anyone's religious liberty.

"Perhaps it is not surprising that in the debates over legal rights for same-sex couples, many claim support from our country's proud tradition of protecting religious freedom."

BJC welcomes three summer interns to Washington

The BJC is pleased to announce our summer interns working with the staff in Washington, D.C.

Kevin Burrow is a rising senior at Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas, majoring in religion with a minor in political science. Burrow is a native of Tulia, Texas, and is the son of Scott and Zane Burrow.

Elizabeth Boone is a rising senior at the University of Richmond. A history major with a minor in women, gender and sexuality studies, she is serving as a Virginia Baptist Summer Missionary. The Dallas, Texas native is the daughter of Thomas and Cordelia Boone.

Sam Riddle is in his junior year at the University of North Carolina Asheville. The political science major is a native of Yadkinville, North Carolina, and is the son of Bobby and Robin Riddle.



Burrow



Boone



Riddle

D.C. church wins fight to demolish its 'ugly' building

City officials have cleared the way for a Christian Science congregation to raze what has been called Washington's "ugliest church" in a fight that has pitted the church against architectural preservationists.

Parishioners at the Third Church of Christ, Scientist, say their 1970s modernist church is crumbling, uninviting and too expensive for the small downtown flock to maintain. Church officials want to tear down the bunker-like structure, located two blocks from the White House, and replace it with a revenue-generating office building that includes space for the church.



Third Church of Christ, Scientist

Preservationists say the building is a classic example of Brutalist architecture that should be maintained for future generations.

In May, Harriet Tregoning, director of the city's Office of Planning, overruled a decision last year by the city's Historic Preservation Board that granted the building landmark status and prevented its demolition. Tregoning said forcing the congregation to maintain the building "would result in the inevitable demise of the Third Church as a downtown congregation" and would violate the spirit of the landmarking law.

She rejected arguments that the building could be

retooled for new use as a restaurant or museum, but also sidestepped parishioners' First Amendment claims that they were being restricted from the "free exercise" of their religion.

—Religion News Service

Saudi Arabian officials visit the BJC

On May 18, Baptist Joint Committee Executive Director J. Brent Walker met with nine officials from the Saudi Ministry of Education as part of a U.S. State Department project to explore the nature of religious and public secondary education in the United States.

As part of its program, the delegation examined religious and ethnic diversity

in the United States, as well as the relationship between government authority and religious practices, including the nature of involvement by government in operations of religious educational institutions.

During its visit to the BJC's office on Capitol Hill, Walker presented background on the First Amendment's religion clauses that guarantee the free exercise of religion while prohibiting the government's establishment of religion. Walker also provided background on the diversity of religious views in the United States, including a discussion of the Baptist denomination and its historical belief in religious liberty and church-state separation.

—Jeff Huett



BJC Executive Director J. Brent Walker (right) leads a discussion with nine officials from the Saudi Ministry of Education on their visit to the United States.

BJC seeks end to D.C. school vouchers

The Baptist Joint Committee signed a letter with more than 30 other education, public policy and religious organizations asking Congress to end the District of Columbia's school voucher plan, known as the Opportunity Scholarship Program. The BJC believes these programs blur the line between church and state. Taxpayers should not be required to fund private religious institutions, and many schools participating in the program are religious schools. The voucher plan is up for reauthorization this year.

A recent spending bill passed by Congress would end the program in 2010. However, President Barack Obama wants to continue the vouchers for students already enrolled in the plan, and some Congressional leaders want a complete reauthorization of the program. The matter could come to the Senate floor for debate and a vote sometime this summer.

—Cherilyn Crowe

Baptist Joint Committee
Supporting Bodies

- Alliance of Baptists
- American Baptist Churches USA
- Baptist General Association of Virginia
- Baptist General Conference
- Baptist General Convention of Missouri
- 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

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Jeff Huett
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◆ Development Update ◆

It's not too late!

Don't wait until you are in Houston to purchase tickets for this year's Religious Liberty Council luncheon. Save money and purchase your tickets online at www.BJCOnline.org for only \$35 each. You may pick up tickets purchased after June 19 at the BJC exhibit during the CBF General Assembly.

A limited number of tickets will be available for purchase during the assembly for \$40 each.

If you cannot make it to Houston this summer, consider participating in this popular event by sponsoring a table for students or others who would otherwise be unable to attend. Tables are \$350 and are also available for purchase on the BJC Web site.

Rep. Chet Edwards of Texas will deliver the keynote address. Edwards is an advocate of religious liberty and a friend of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Religious Liberty Council Luncheon
11:30 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. on **Fri., July 3**
George R. Brown Convention Center
Ballroom B
Houston, Texas

Contact Kristin Clifton at 202-544-4226 or kciflton@bjconline.org for more information.

What "freedom" really means

Do you take time to think about what our freedom as Americans really means? This Independence Day, encourage your congregation to consider one of our most important freedoms: religious freedom.

The Baptist Joint Committee would like to assist you in planning your own Religious Liberty Day emphasis by providing you resources for facilitating a discussion about religious freedom. We are happy to give you materials ranging from bulletin inserts, songs, children's sermons, and study guides geared to educate your congregation about religious liberty.

These resources are available online at www.BJCOnline.org. Just click on the "resources" tab and take a look at the documents.

For more information, contact Kristin Clifton by calling 202-544-4226 or sending an email to kciflton@bjconline.org.

