REPORT from the Capital

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Baptist Joint Committee

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INSIDE:

Supreme Court considers use of sacramental tea

Lawyers for a small Christian sect asked the U.S. Supreme Court on Nov. 1 to allow the importation of a sacramental tea from Brazil, a move that government officials say violates federal drug laws.

The justices seemed skeptical that the government has a compelling reason to ban the sacramental *hoasca* tea, which is used by the 140 members of the O Centro Espirita Beneficiente Uniao de Vegetal (UDV), mostly in New Mexico.

A 1993 law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, compels the government to allow religious practice unless it has a compelling interest not to. Supporters of the sect say the case has wide implications for the ability of all religious groups to practice their faith without risk of government interference.

Several justices asked why *hoasca* should be banned when *peyote*—used in Native American rituals—is allowed. "*Peyote* seems to have been administered without the sky falling in," said Justice Stephen Breyer.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg added, "If the government must accommodate one, why not the other?"

At the same time, the high court appeared torn over whether the plants that are used to make the tea are banned under a 1971 international drug treaty. The treaty bans the importation of the substance dimethyltryptamine (DMT), which is found in the *hoasca* tea.

President Jeffrey Bronfman and other members of Uniao de Vegetal gather outside of the U.S. Supreme Court on Nov. 1 for a case involving the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

UDV members say the tea, which is brewed in the religion's Brazilian homeland, gives them a "heightened spiritual awareness" that allows them to communicate with God. UDV compares the tea with sacramental wine used in the Christian sacrament of Communion.

Nancy Hollander, the lawyer for the UDV, insisted that *hoasca* is not banned by the treaty, and argued that the 1993 law would allow the government to sidestep parts of the treaty in the interest of ensuring religious freedom.

"But the reason you import it is because it contains this particular substance," which is banned, countered Justice John Paul Stevens.

The case started in 1999 when federal agents seized a shipment of *hoasca* in New Mexico. The UDV filed suit and won its case in federal court, a ruling that was upheld by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Edwin Kneedler, the deputy solicitor general for the Bush administration, said the government's "compelling interest" in limiting the use of *hoasca* is "uniform enforcement" of drug laws.

The use of *peyote*, Kneedler argued, is different because it involves the sovereign rights of Indian tribes to govern their own affairs. But with *hoasca*, the government has an obligation to "live up to its treaties," he said.

Hollander dismissed concerns that the tea would be made available to UDV outsiders or otherwise misused. "This religion protects its sacrament very seriously," she told reporters outside the court.

Whichever way the justices rule, the court showed strong deference to the 1993 religious freedom law, which was passed by Congress in response to court decisions in the early 1990s that were more favorable to government regulation.

A wide array of religious groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee, filed briefs at the court in favor of the UDV and the religious freedom law.

John Boyd, a lawyer for the UDV, said the group just "wants to be left alone" and has no interest in recruiting members to drink the tea or engage in drug use.

"There is no legitimate, much less compelling, interest in suppressing" religious exercise, Boyd said.

—RNS

Religious leaders ask Congress to protect expressions of faith on job

The fight to protect the faith of America's workers on the job advanced slightly in the United States House of Representatives Nov. 10, when the Subcommittee on Employer-Employee Relations held what is believed to be the first hearing on the Workplace Religious Freedom Act, or WRFA.

Attorney James Standish, congressional liaison of the Seventh-day Adventist world church to the Congress, said the hearing was a milestone. A similar hearing in the United States Senate is expected sometime in the new year, a Senate staffer told Adventist News Network.

Rep. Sam Johnson, R-Texas, center, makes a comment during the WRFA legislation hearing. (Photo: Mark A. Kellner/ANN)

"This is a very important step forward, and I think that while we have a long way to go, we've made great strides," Standish told ANN. "What we need is for everyone who supports freedom to do their part and let their representatives and senators know their views and ask them to move this thing forward."

"In general, employees should not have to choose between a job and their religion. It's just that simple," declared subcommittee chairman Rep. Sam Johnson, R-Texas, in an opening statement. However, Johnson also declared "the right balance" needs to be maintained between the needs of business owners and those owners "respecting all employees."

Testifying in support of WRFA, Richard T. Foltin, American Jewish Committee's legislative director and counsel, pointed out that current civil rights law does not adequately protect religiously observant employees. "WRFA provides an important bulwark against religious discrimination in the workplace," he said.

Acknowledging that current civil rights law defines the refusal of an employer to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious practice as a form of religious discrimination, Foltin argued that "the standard has been so vitiated by the fashion in which it has been interpreted by the courts as to needlessly force upon religiously observant employees a conflict between the dictates of religious conscience and the requirements of the workplace."

If passed as written, the bill would require employers with more than 15 workers on their payroll to not discriminate against any employee who "with or without reasonable accommodation" is qualified to perform the essential functions of a job, unless that accommodation constitutes an "undue hardship," according to the bill's draft.

WRFA is supported by a wide coalition of religious groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee.

—Adventist News Network and American Jewish Committee

U.S. House passes housing bill opposed by church groups

The U.S. House has approved a controversial measure that would deny new federal housing funds to any nonprofit group—including churches—that have engaged in voter registration or get-out-the-vote activities.

The Republican-backed provision, attached to the Federal Housing Finance Reform Act, passed the House Oct. 26 in a 331-90 vote. A host of Democrats and church-based groups said the measure was unconstitutional.

A move to strip the voting-related provisions from the larger housing bill was also defeated, largely along party lines, 220-200.

"It is unacceptable to force a poisoned choice on these entities: to help fill critical housing needs or to exercise their basic civic responsibilities," said Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi.

The bill denies money from the new Affordable Housing Fund to any group that had engaged in nonpartisan voter activities in the previous 12 months.

It also prohibits any voter activity after a grant has been awarded.

Opponents said the bill unfairly targets black churches because they are most likely to work on low-income housing and are also involved in voter registration campaigns, and have members who tend to vote Democratic.

The bill also denies funding to organizations who do not list housing as their "primary purpose." Catholic Charities USA, for example, said that it would make most churches ineligible because housing is only a portion of their ministries.

The provision was drafted by the Republican Study Committee, which was concerned that federal housing funds would be directed to housing activists with close ties to the Democratic party. Rep. Mike Pence, an Indiana Republican and chairman of the RSC, was unavailable for comment.

"The only conclusion to draw from this action is some members of the majority party are afraid of more low-income people participating in elections," said Sheila Crowley, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

The measure now goes to the Senate, where Crowley said her organization will work to defeat the voting provisions.

—RNS

REFLECTIONS

J. Brent Walker
Executive Director

Respecting religious diversity during the holiday season

Are "Christian haters" and "professional atheists" engaged in an all-out war on Christmas, as FOX News' anchor John Gibson claims? I don't think so—unless one is prepared to say that President Bush and the First Lady are leading the effort. This year's White House greeting card extends "best wishes for a holiday season of hope and happiness." No mention of "Merry Christmas" from the First Family.

About a dozen holy days are observed by various religious groups between Thanksgiving and New Year's. For decades we have been confronted by that "December dilemma" of how to acknowledge and celebrate winter religious holidays, usually in the context of the schools, in a way that is constitutional and culturally sensitive. People of good faith, including the Baptist Joint Committee, have worked long and hard to develop guidelines that comply with the Supreme Court's interpretation of the First Amendment's religion clauses, and respect the amazing religious diversity in this country.

There is widespread agreement that:

1. Holiday concerts in the public schools can and should include religious music along with the secular, as long as the sacred does not dominate.

2. Religious dramatic productions can be presented in the public schools as long as they do not involve worship and are part of an effort to use religious holidays as an occasion to teach about religion.

3. Free standing crèches, as thoroughly religious Christian symbols, should not be sponsored by government, but Christmas trees and menorahs are sufficiently secular to allow their display without a constitutional problem.

Having settled many of the legal issues, some are now bent on fighting battles in a culture war against an enemy that does not exist. Some on the religious and media right lament political correctness run amok by calling a Christmas tree a "holiday tree" and extending "seasons greetings" instead of "Merry Christmas." In fact, they have threatened lawsuits to rectify such indiscretions and, in the private sector, encouraged a boycott of merchants that fail to use the right words.

What irony and how sad—to be picking a fight over what to call a season that for many celebrates the coming of the Prince of Peace. We would all do well to take a deep breath and exercise some common sense as we think and talk about this season.

Christmas is Christmas and a tree is a tree. There's nothing wrong with calling it what it is: a Christmas tree. And it is perfectly appropriate to extend a specific holiday greeting such as my Jewish friends do when they wish me a "Merry Christmas," and I return a "Happy Hanukkah."

But often it's quite appropriate to wish another "happy holidays" or "season's greetings." It's just a matter of good manners and common courtesy. If I am talking to a person whose religious affiliation I do not know, I will employ the more general greeting. And the same goes for merchants who have advertised goods to Americans of many religious traditions who may or may not celebrate Christmas.

None of this disparages Christmas one iota or diminishes my enjoyment of it in the least.

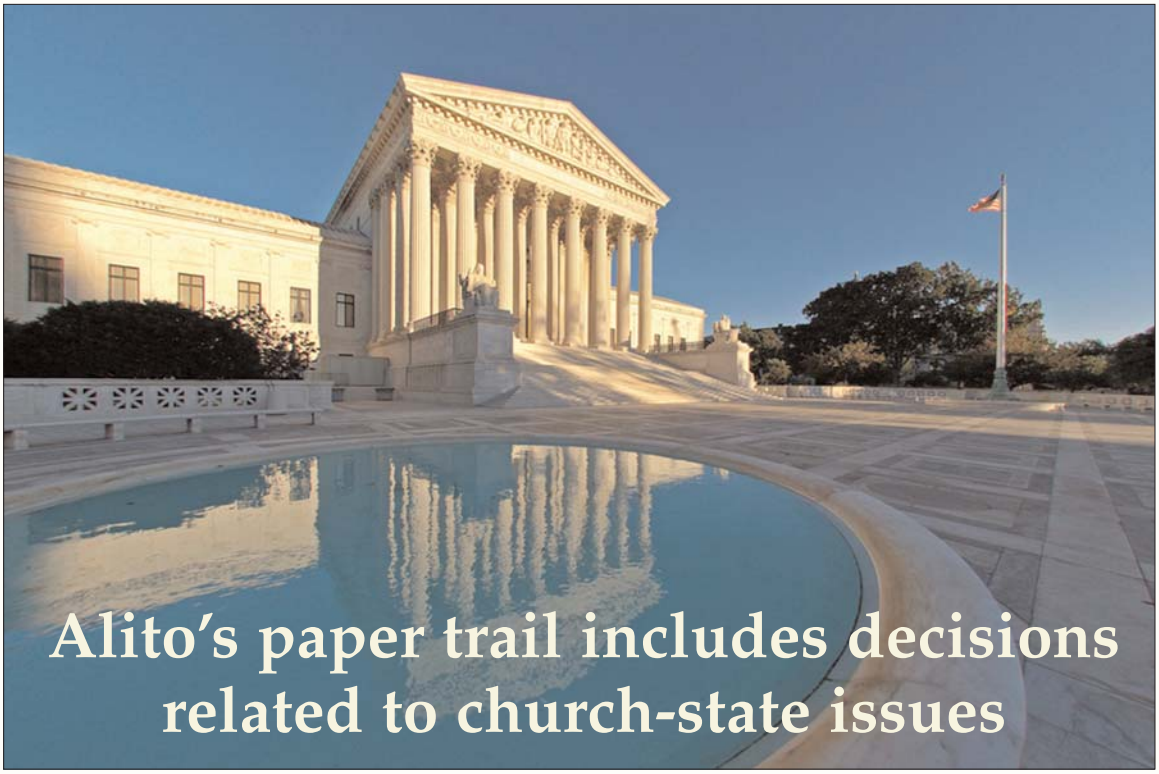
Then why are these culture warriors bound to start a brouhaha in the midst of the love, joy, peace and hope of Advent?

It's part of a concerted effort to affirm the mythical "Christian nation" status of the United States. (By the way, the Puritans and many other religious people well into the 19th century refused to celebrate Christmas because they thought it was unchristian and not supported by Scripture). So, in the words of the title of the Beatles song, "I, Me, Mine," it's all about ME and the brash assertion of MY supposed right to impose my religion on others. Moreover, and I hope it is not a too jaded thought, these bombastic diatribes about a war on Christmas attract publicity and make for good fund raising. (Truth be known, the Christmas spirit is threatened more by runaway commercialism—beginning just after Halloween!?—than by any supposed cultural hostility to a holiday that more than 90 percent of our citizens celebrate.)

What irony and how sad—to be picking a fight over what to call a season that for many celebrates the coming of the Prince of Peace. We would all do well to take a deep breath and exercise some common sense as we think and talk about this season.

No, we do not need government promoting our religious holidays to the exclusion of others. Nor do we need a corps of purity police trying to dissuade our efforts to respect the religious diversity that is the hallmark of this country.

To all of our readers, then: Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a Joyous Kwanzaa, Martyrdom Day of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Bodhi Day, Maunajiyaras Day, Beginning of Masa'il, Nisf Sha'ban and Yalda Night, Yule and Shinto Winter Solstice, and Ramadan! Or, happy holidays!



Alito's paper trail includes decisions related to church-state issues

Samuel Alito, George W. Bush's third nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court in less than four months, brings a long paper trail from his 15 years on the federal bench, including several opinions involving church-state issues. While that record sets him apart from the President's previous nominees—Harriet Miers and John Roberts—it is also likely to fuel a contentious hearing process in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

With President George W. Bush looking on, Judge Samuel A. Alito acknowledges his nomination on Oct. 31 as Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. (White House photo by Paul Morse)

Alito's record quickly appealed to religious conservatives, with groups like the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) and the National Clergy Council announcing their support for the President's pick within hours of his nomination on Oct. 31. Jay Sekulow of the ACLJ and religious broadcaster Pat Robertson both called the nomination a "grand slam."

Liberal groups, like Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the American Civil Liberties Union, were almost as speedy in raising concerns or objections to Bush's latest candidate. Senate Democrats have talked about a filibuster to block Alito's nomination, according to several published reports. Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee that will oversee Alito's confirmation hearings, called the nomination "needlessly provocative."

Those groups made quick analyses of Alito's positions on such religious matters as abortion and the public display of religious symbols. His potential position on these issues is all the more important because he would fill the seat of retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor—who often provided a pivotal swing vote on matters involving the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which ensures the "free exercise" of religion and bars Congress from making laws "respecting an establishment of religion."

Many legal experts have noted Judge Alito's opinions in favor of religious expression.

"Judge Alito is very respectful of religious liberty," said Kevin Hasson, chairman of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

In cases where free exercise collides with government, Alito "would probably reconcile it more on the side of free exercise" than maintaining the wall of separation, according to Ronald Chen, who teaches church-state relations at Rutgers School of Law in Newark.

For example, many note a dissent in a case about a kindergarten Thanksgiving display. Zachary Hood of Medford, N.J., created a poster saying he was thankful for Jesus. School officials concerned about its religious theme took it down, then put it back up in a less prominent place.

Aided by the Becket Fund, Zachary and his mother sued. By a vote of 10-2, the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled it was not clear who, if anyone, might have infringed Zachary's rights. Alito wrote the dissenting opinion accusing his fellow judges of ducking an important First Amendment issue.

"I would hold that discriminatory treatment of the poster because of its 'religious theme' would violate the First Amendment," Alito wrote, joined by Judge Carol Mansmann. "School officials are not permitted to discriminate against student expression because of its religious character."

The case did not end there. The Becket Fund refiled its lawsuit and won a $35,000 settlement for Zachary and his mother in 2002. The following year the U.S. Department of Education promulgated guidelines allowing students to "express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork and other written and oral assignments."

"We like to call them Zach's Regs," Hasson said. "We consider that a great victory."

In other cases before the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, where Alito has served since 1990, he has leaned toward the interests of religious expression, disagreeing with some of his fellow judges, according to Ira C. Lupu, a George Washington University law professor and co-director of the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy's legal project. In *ACLU vs. Schundler*, Alito wrote an opinion upholding a Christmas-Hannukah display at City Hall in Jersey City.

Lupu's colleague at George Washington University and co-director of the Roundtable's legal project, Robert Tuttle, noted another case in which Alito showed a commitment to the principle of religious liberty. *Fraternal Order of Police vs. City of Newark* involved a police department policy that required officers to cut their facial hair. The department allowed exceptions to the rule for medical reasons, but not to Muslim men whose religious beliefs were violated by the policy. Judge Alito authored an opinion that the police department's policy unconstitutionally discriminated against the Muslims, because the department granted secular exemptions, but failed to respect their religious claims for exemption.

According to Lupu and Tuttle, it may not be easy to predict what Alito's confirmation to the nation's highest court would mean for cases that could affect the Bush administration's Faith-Based and Community Initiative, which encourages religious organizations to compete for government contracts to provide social services.

While Alito has written a considerable number of opinions involving the First Amendment's religion clauses, none appear to involve taxpayer funding of religious groups, according to Lupu.

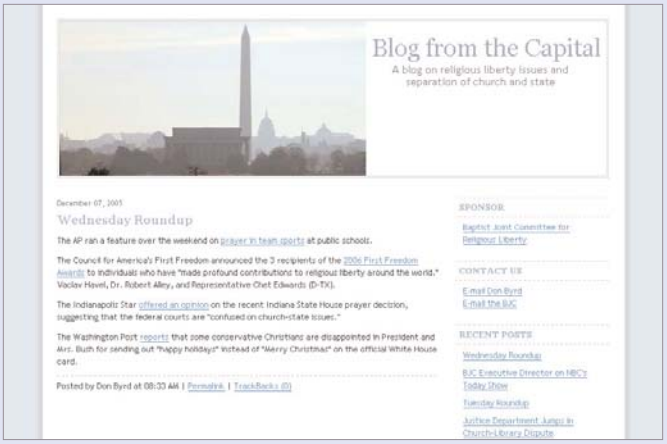
Nonetheless, these cases shed little light on what Alito's stance might be regarding government funding to faith-based groups.

"In general, he seems especially receptive to claims of free exercise of religion, and to claims of equal access of religious speech to the public forum," Lupu said. "But none of his opinions look or sound appreciably different from those written or joined by Sandra Day O'Connor, and she remains a moderate separationist on funding cases.

"So Alito's potential impact on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative is impossible to predict," Lupu concluded.

Lupu emphasized that his comparison of Alito to the centrist O'Connor applied only to cases involving religion.

—Claire Hughes, The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, www.religionandsocialpolicy.org, and RNS



www.BJConline.org/blog

BJC launches continually updated Web log

Been looking for one place to go on the Internet for up-to-date news and commentary at the intersection of church and state? Bookmark the new BJC web log called "Blog from the Capital." A complementary offering to the BJC Web site and this publication, the web log will include links to compelling articles from sources not found on the www.BJConline.org Web site and will feature commentary from the primary blog contributor, Don Byrd.

Check out the blog for links to news stories on court filings, decisions, legislation and constitutional arguments regarding religious liberty. Also, look for links to information on the threatening actions of those who would undermine the principles of church-state separation and news at the intersection of faith and politics.

Now online at www.BJConline.org/blog.

K. Hollyn Hollman
General Counsel

Protecting the few ensures religious liberty for the many

What must the government do to protect the "free exercise" of religion? Baptists are rarely forced to contemplate that question since the law has generally developed in ways that avoid conflict with practices of the Christian majority. Yet Baptists who know their history recognize that when anyone's religious liberty is denied, everyone's religious liberty is threatened. That concern explains one reason for the BJC's involvement in the case of *O Centro Espirita Beneficiente Uniao Do Vegetal vs. Gonzalez*, heard by the Supreme Court in November.

Tim O'Brien of PBS' "Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly" interviews BJC General Counsel Hollyn Hollman about the UDV case at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The case is about the federal government's attempt to prohibit a small church from practicing its religion, which involves the central sacrament of ingesting tea that is ritually prepared from two plants. The church (UDV) follows religious teachings from a religion native to Brazil. The chemical DMT results from the preparation of the tea, known by its Portuguese name "*hoasca*," and is on a list of chemicals regulated by the Controlled Substances Act.

The UDV church has about 150 members in the United States. It sued the government under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) to stop it from using the Controlled Substances Act against them after the government confiscated the church's plants and records. Despite the small number of adherents of the UDV church in America, the case has the potential for a much greater impact on the continuing vitality of RFRA.

This is the first RFRA case to reach the Supreme Court since the 1997 *City of Boerne* case invalidated its application to state laws. RFRA, which was supported by a broad coalition of religious and civil liberties organizations with the leadership of the BJC, requires that the federal government have a compelling interest, exercised by the least restrictive means, when it substantially burdens religion. The federal statute is seen as an essential protection for religion in light of the Supreme Court's 1990 *Smith* decision interpreting the Free Exercise Clause.

In the UDV case, the government argues that it has a compelling interest in the "uniform application" of the drug laws. In other words: the Controlled Substances Act cannot allow exceptions based upon religious beliefs. That analysis, if adopted by the Court, would sharply limit RFRA. RFRA was specifically designed to make it hard for government to impinge on the free exercise of religion without a good, specific reason. The government's position would allow the federal government to be excused from making the proper statutory showing. As 10th Circuit Judge Michael McConnell explained in the case below, "Congress' general conclusion that DMT is dangerous in the abstract does not establish that the government has a compelling interest in prohibiting the consumption of *hoasca* under the conditions presented in this case."

In an *amicus* brief written by Professor Thomas C. Berg of the University of St. Thomas School of Law and attorneys at the law firm of Winston and Strawn, the BJC joined other organizations to defend the proper statutory interpretation of RFRA and its goal of protecting religious liberty. The brief argues that by design RFRA requires the federal government to demonstrate a compelling interest in restricting the UDV's use of *hoasca* in particular, not the use of *hoasca* or other drugs generally. The statute requires that the government demonstrate its interest with case-specific facts, not reliance on general Congressional findings about the dangers of controlled substances.

When Congress passed RFRA, it recognized that many times general laws incidentally and unintentionally harm religion. RFRA was intended to guard against such harms. The BJC's brief argues that the government cannot avoid its burden under RFRA by asserting that the drug laws can bear no exemptions. To satisfy the compelling interest test, the government must show a serious harm, based on specific evidence rather than speculation or conclusory statements.

In the courts below, the government has failed to make such a showing and UDV has prevailed. Questions from the bench at oral argument indicated skepticism from several justices about the government's sweeping theory. Still, the context of federal drug laws and international treaty obligations relating to them make this case a challenging one. While religious conflicts dealing with such laws are relatively rare, the Court's approach and decision is likely to have consequences far beyond UDV, extending to the full range of religious practices that at times must rely on the statutory protections for religious freedom.

The case provides another example of how religious liberty for any one of us is tied to our willingness to fight for religious liberty for everyone.

Indiana legislature's prayers must delete 'Christ', federal judge says

A federal judge in Indiana has said that state's practice of allowing explicitly Christian prayers to open legislative sessions violates the Constitution.

In a Nov. 30 ruling, Federal District Judge David Hamilton ordered a halt to official sectarian invocations in the Indiana House of Representatives.

"If the speaker [of the House] chooses to continue any form of legislative prayer, he shall advise persons offering such a prayer (a) that it must be nonsectarian and must not be used to proselytize or advance any one faith or belief or to disparage any other faith or belief, and (b) that they should refrain from using Christ's name or title or any other denominational appeal," Hamilton wrote.

The decision came in a lawsuit filed against Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma, who coordinates the prayers by picking Indiana clergy and laypeople who are recommended by legislators.

"If the speaker [of the House] chooses to continue any form of legislative prayer, he shall advise persons offering such a prayer ... that they should refrain from using Christ's name or title or any other denominational appeal."

— Judge David Hamilton, in a ruling halting official sectarian invocations in the Indiana House of Representatives.

The Indiana Civil Liberties Union filed the suit on behalf of four Indianans—a Quaker, a Methodist minister and two Catholics—who were offended by the practice of government-sponsored sectarian prayer, even if they were prayers of their own Christian faith.

In 1983, the Supreme Court affirmed the Nebraska Legislature's practice of paying a Presbyterian chaplain who opened the body's sessions with a prayer. However, those prayers did not include specific references to Christ.

— ABP

High court refuses review of attempt to remove 'In God We Trust'

The Supreme Court has declined an attempt to have the words "In God We Trust" removed from the front of a North Carolina county government building.

The justices declined, without comment, Nov. 14 to hear a case about the Davidson County Government Center in Lexington, N.C. Two local attorneys who regularly do business at the building had sued the county, saying the inscription of the national motto was a violation of the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion.

County commissioners voted to add the inscription to the building's façade in 2002. According to court papers, it was paid for by donations from individuals and local churches, and those who spoke in favor of it at the meeting where it was considered cited religious reasons for supporting it as well as the secular rationale that it is the national motto. It is written in 18-inch-high letters—larger than the name of the building—according to the plaintiffs.

In 2004, a federal district court said the inscription's opponents had not proven that the inscription was created with an insufficiently secular purpose or that it unconstitutionally endorsed or caused entanglement with religion. A unanimous three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld their decision earlier this year.

"In this situation, the reasonable observer must be deemed aware of the patriotic uses, both historical and present, of the phrase 'In God We Trust,'" said Judge Robert King.

He noted that the phrase has appeared on American coinage since the mid-1800s, and was made the official national motto by Congress in 1956. It also is inscribed above the speaker's rostrum in the House of Representatives and above the main door to the Senate floor, King pointed out.

"In this situation, the reasonable observer must be deemed aware of the patriotic uses, both historical and present, of the phrase 'In God We Trust.'"

— Judge Robert King, in a decision upholding 'In God We Trust' on government property.

"[W]e are obliged to assess the [county] board's use of the national motto on the façade of the Government Center in its full context—as a statement with religious content, and as one with legitimate secular associations born of its consistent use on coins and currency, and as the national motto," King wrote.

The justices did not record any dissent in turning away the North Carolina case. It is *Lambeth vs. Board of Commissioners of Davidson County*, No. 05-203.

— ABP

Ruling in intelligent design trial expected in December or January

A six-week federal trial in Pennsylvania over a school district's policy on intelligent design has ended with both sides claiming victory on the issue of how science should be taught in public schools.

U.S. Middle District Court Judge John E. Jones III plans to issue a ruling in December or January on whether the Dover Area School District's policy is constitutional, as the district has argued, or a violation of the First Amendment's Establishment Clause, as is alleged by 11 parents who filed the lawsuit to have the policy revoked.

Since the start of the trial Sept. 26, the district's lawyers have argued that the school board's policy on intelligent design and the concept of intelligent design are not religious. The trial ended Nov. 4.

The policy, adopted last fall, requires that a statement on intelligent design be read to ninth-graders at the start of a science unit on evolution.

The statement says evolution is "not a fact" and refers to intelligent design as an alternative explanation of the origin of life.

At issue is not just whether the board's policy was adopted with religious intent, but whether intelligent design—which holds that some aspects of life are so complex they must be the work of an intelligent designer—is religious.

— RNS

Baptist Joint Committee Supporting Bodies

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- 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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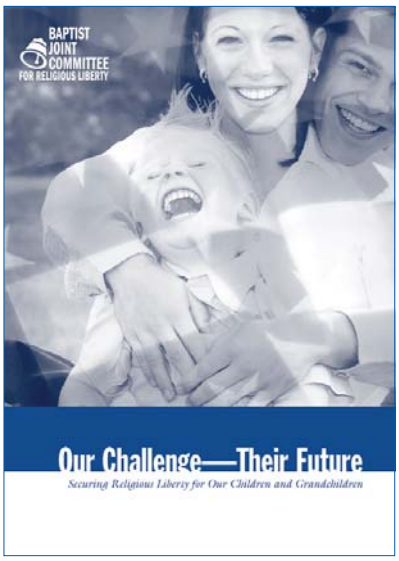
Capital Campaign Update

2006 an important year for campaign, 70th anniversary

The effort to raise $5 million to purchase and renovate property for the Center for Religious Liberty on Capitol Hill is underway, and 2006 is shaping up to be a busy year for the campaign.

In the coming months, BJC Executive Director Brent Walker will speak in communities to generate support among Baptists and others for the cause of religious liberty and for the Center for Religious Liberty. Also, BJC supporters will have the opportunity to give to the campaign. For more information or to make a gift, please contact the BJC at 202-544-4226 or e-mail us at bjc@BJConline.org.



The Baptist Joint Committee board of directors launched the fund raising effort at an event in October. The campaign corresponds to the 70th anniversary of the BJC, which since 1936, has fought to extend and defend God-given religious liberty for all.

The Center for Religious Liberty will be a state-of-the-art education and training center and the nerve center for the BJC's activities in Washington. The building on Capitol Hill will enable creative partnerships with academic institutions, provide vital space for strategy and information-sharing sessions with the BJC's coalition partners and create essential visibility for the organization in our nation's capital — all with goal of securing religious liberty for the next generation.

Our Challenge—Their Future

Securing religious liberty for our children and grandchildren

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