

July 12, 2006

LEADERSHIP UNABLE TO MOVE PLEDGE BILL

Perhaps the Pledge Protection Act will have passed the House by the time this Chairman's Report arrives in your mailbox. Then again, perhaps it will not have passed.

The Republican Leadership in the House had promised us a vote on the Pledge Protection Act on Flag Day which was June 14th. We even scheduled a huge press conference in Upper Senate Park that was to be both a celebration of victory in the House and the start of a full court press in the Senate. Unfortunately the bill failed to pass out of the Judiciary Committee on June 13th, as I commented on in the last Report.

The Leadership in the House then told us we would have a vote "just before" the July 4th recess. That did not happen either. In fact the hearings in the Judiciary Committee turned into a sad comedy of errors on the part of the Republican majority.

The Judiciary Committee, in total state of confusion, managed to drop the ball. The PPA failed to go to the floor because of a tie vote in a committee that has seven more Republicans than Democrats. Below is our "timeline of failure" on the PPA:

June 13, 2006

PPA was first on the agenda of the Judiciary Committee, but was not visited until the end of the committee meeting. As a result, Chairman Sensenbrenner (R-WI) adjourned the meeting literally in the middle of discussion on the PPA.

June 20, 2006

Although listed on the agenda of the Judiciary Committee the PPA was never visited on this day.

June 27, 2006

Majority Leader Boehner announced the American Values Agenda, with the PPA listed as top priority.

June 28, 2006

PPA was first on the agenda of the Judiciary Committee. Three amendments were offered by Democrats which would have gutted the bill. Over a period of six hours the Democrat amendments were voted down by the majority Republicans. Yet the final vote for the PPA resulted in a 15-15 tie. In a surprise to all present Congressman Inglis (R-SC) voted against the PPA on ideological grounds and six Republicans (Hyde, Cannon, Bachus, Issa, Flake, and Pence) failed to be present. As a result of the tie, the PPA was defeated. Only a congressman who previously voted "no" can call to re-consider under House rules.

June 29, 2006

Representative Inglis under the rules could have made a motion to reconsider the PPA on the 29th. The Committee reconvened and the PPA was brought up for a motion, but Rep. Inglis refused to motion to recommit and as a result the committee adjourned without a new vote on the PPA.

This fiasco was a major blow to Majority Leader Boehner (R-OH) who had personally championed the Pledge Protection Act. The Leader's office is now working with Chairman Sensenbrenner to make sure that the PPA is brought up again as soon as possible, preferably before the Public Expression of Religion Act (HR 2679) which was listed as number three on the Majority Leader's "American Values Agenda."

Meanwhile the failure of the Pledge Protection Act has emboldened liberals all over the nation. The liberal San Francisco Chronicle ran a "news" article about the Pledge Protection Act and the rest of the Values Agenda that basically calls them political stunts. The ACLU, People for the American Way and Americans United for Separation of Church and State all issued victory statements claiming that they had blocked the "religious right agenda."

THE FLAG, THE PLEDGE AND THE NATIONAL MOTTO

Just before the July 4th recess the Senate tried and failed to pass a Constitutional Amendment to protect the flag from desecration. Then the House failed even to get the Pledge Protection Act to the floor for a vote. Hopefully we can manage to pass a simple Congressional resolution acknowledging the 50th anniversary of our national motto, "In God We Trust."

July 30th is indeed the 50th anniversary of "In God We Trust" becoming the official motto of the United States of America. Although the motto was used for nearly two centuries on coins and currency it was not until 1956 that the motto was made official. At a time when atheist Michael Newdow has filed lawsuits to remove our national motto from our currency, it is appropriate that both the House and the Senate pass resolutions of support for the motto on its 50th anniversary.

The commemoration resolution (H. Con Res. 411) in the House is sponsored by Congressman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) and (S. Con. Res. 96) in the Senate by Senator Sam Brownback (R.KS). In the House there are 57 co-sponsors and in the Senate just 16. Please contact your congressman and Senators and ask them to co-sponsor the "In God We Trust" commemoration resolutions.

Although the resolution in the Senate was authored by Senator Brownback, some Democrats running for reelection this year have or will jump on board. Democrat Senator Byrd, who is in a tough reelection battle in West Virginia, has become a co-sponsor. The Religious Freedom Coalition is in the process of organizing a rally and news conference on behalf of the commemoration resolution for the week of July 24th to encourage a vote in the House and Senate before the actual anniversary. To participate in the rally please watch our Internet site at www.rfcnet.org for an exact time, date and place.

GOOD FLAG NEWS - The Freedom to Display the American Flag Act (HR 42), which ensures an individual has the right to display the U.S. flag on residential property, was passed just before the July 4th recess. The bill's author, Congressman Bartlett (R-MD), said, "I was alarmed to learn from my constituent Hugh Warner, who is a flag dealer, that some homeowners' associations and condos prevent Americans from flying the American flag at their homes. That's why I introduced this bill." He said that, "H.R. 42 will guarantee Americans the freedom to display the American flag in front of their homes."

The bill had the support of virtually all veterans groups as well as social conservative groups. It was the first of the American Values Agenda proposed by House Leadership to pass!

WHAT IS NEXT IN “AMERICAN VALUES AGENDA?”

House action on the American Values Agenda began June 27th with passage of the Freedom to Display the American Flag Act mentioned above. Below is a list of the full agenda proposed for the rest of 2006 by House Republican Leadership:

Pledge Protection Act (HR 2389; Rep. Akin)

Summary: Protects the Pledge of Allegiance from attacks by activist federal judges seeking to rule it unconstitutional.

Freedom to Display the American Flag Act (HR 42; Rep. Bartlett) - *PASSED*

Summary: Ensures an individual has the right to display the U.S. flag on residential property.

The Public Expression of Religion Act (HR 2679; Rep. Hostettler)

Summary: Ensures local officials and communities do not face financial ruin to defend their rights to free speech under the Constitution (provides that when state or local officials are sued over public expressions of religion, no monetary damages, costs, or attorney's fees may be awarded).

Marriage Amendment (HJ Res. 88; Rep. Musgrave)

Summary: Constitutional amendment declaring marriage to be between a man and a woman

Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act (HR 356; Rep. C. Smith)

Summary: Requires that those performing late-term abortions inform the woman seeking an abortion of the medical evidence that the unborn child feels pain, and ensure that if she chooses to continue with the abortion procedure, she has the option of choosing anesthesia for the child, so that the unborn child's pain is less severe.

Human Cloning Prohibition Act (HR 1357; Rep. D. Weldon)

Summary: Bans human cloning and the importation of products derived from a cloned human embryo (e.g. stem cells).

BATFE Reform (HR 5092; Rep. Coble)

Summary: Reforms the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (BATFE) to protect citizens' rights.

Internet Gambling Prohibition (Reps. Leach & Goodlatte)

Summary: Addresses the issue of illegal Internet gambling by making gambling laws apply equally to the Internet.

Disaster Recovery Personal Protection Act (HR 5013; Rep. Jindal)

Summary: Prohibits governments from using federal funds to confiscate guns from law-abiding citizens during emergencies.

Permanent Tax Relief for Families

Summary: Likely series of votes on the child tax credit, marriage penalty relief, tax incentives for adoption, and other priorities for American citizens.

Of the proposed legislation House Majority Leader Boehner (R-OH) said, “The American Values Agenda is a collection of legislative initiatives that speak to the values many American citizens hold dear.” The Religious Freedom Coalition actively supports many of the Agenda items.

SOME VICTORIES FOR SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES

GAY ONLY SCHOOL NO MORE

In 2003 New York City opened a "gay only" high school in flagrant violation of the civil rights of most New Yorkers. One of the chief opponents of the "gay only" school was my close friend, New York State Senator Ruben Diaz (D-NY). A lawsuit was filed against the New York City School system by Mat Staver, the chief counsel of Liberty Counsel to stop this intolerant injustice against the normal heterosexual community. The lawsuit has been settled, with New York City admitting it was wrong and opening the school to normal heterosexual children.

MARRIAGE NOT FOR HOMOSEXUALS

Courts in New York and Georgia have handed the far left and their homosexual money partners big blows. High Courts in both states have ruled against homosexual marriage. The New York Court of Appeals, which is the highest court in New York, has ruled that the law is clear in defining marriage as being between one man and one woman and any change to that law must be made by the legislature, not the courts.

This decision angered far left wingers like Democratic National Chairman Howard Dean, who wants activist courts to forcibly change American morals and traditions. Dean said the court decision was based on "bigoted and outdated notions." In contrast, Judge Robert Smith, writing for the majority, made the case for judicial restraint and against judicial imperialism.

In Georgia the high court ruled that a constitutional amendment passed by 74% of the people in 2004 was indeed the will of the people and that the court could not intervene. Homosexual activists had filed lawsuits claiming that the amendment was confusing and that voters did not know what they were doing. The Court said that the amendment had a single aim, to ban homosexual marriage, and that that purpose was clear to the voters.

INTERNATIONAL

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

The Vacation Bible School sponsored by the Religious Freedom Coalition in the Bethlehem area has concluded. During June many of the youth from the Bethlehem / Beit Jala area were invited to participate in the school, which used materials in both English and Arabic. Volunteers paid their own way from the United States to assist with the VBS, which was held at Hope School in Beit Jala just outside Bethlehem.

Group leader Gary Gorton took my place in distributing funds to needy children at the various Christian schools in the Bethlehem area this year. I normally travel to the Holy Land at least once a year to personally distribute funds to the students and their families. Because of the great needs this year in the Christian areas controlled by the terrorist group Hamas, the funds that would have been used for my expenses were instead distributed to Christian families.

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William J. Murray, Chairman

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