

The Chairman's Action Report

September 14, 2006

THE SURVEY RESULTS ARE IN!

RFC SUPPORTERS PICK TOP ISSUES

This is the last full month of the 109th Congress to meet in session and already half of it is gone. Congress will take much of October off for campaigning. Then comes the general election, the Thanksgiving break and the Christmas breaks which means Congress will be in session only a couple weeks total in November and December. As I mentioned in the last Chairman's Report, if the Republicans lose control of either the House or the Senate, the entire Values Agenda will be dead for at least two years until the next election. Beginning with their first day back on September 6th, we could count on only eight legislative weeks to get done what we can of the Values Agenda. We are now down to less than seven weeks total remaining of actual congressional legislative work.

That is why I turned to the supporters of the Religious Freedom Coalition last month for guidance on what issues and legislation to push the hardest in the short time remaining. Within days of the survey being mailed we began to get responses and it became apparent to our staff here exactly the issues and legislation the supporters of the Religious Freedom Coalition want us to take action on in the limited time remaining for the 109th Congress.

Overwhelmingly The Pledge Protection Act and The Public Expression of Religion Act were voted to the top. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average for The Pledge Protection Act and the Public Expression of Religion Act were both 4.7. On social issues the number three slot went to The Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act which came in third, with 4.2 out of a possible 5.

When supporters were directed to take the survey they were told that the list contained the seven issues remaining out of the ten that the Republican leadership had agreed to bring forward this year. Three of the ten were not listed because they had already been voted on.

SURVEY RESULTS

Pledge Protection Act	4.7
Public Expression of Religion Act	4.7
Unborn Victims of Violence Act	4.2
Permanent Tax Relief for Families	4.1
Internet Gambling Prohibition Act	3.4
Disaster Recovery Personal Protection Act	3.4
BATFE Reform	3.1

IMMIGRATION

Senate Amnesty Plan	0.9
House Security First Plan	4.7

The trend in the survey results is undeniable and the results were immediately presented to both the House and the Senate leadership!

As a result of information gained from the survey, the Religious Freedom Coalition will focus on the three main issues that supporters have indicated. Our Executive Director, Peggy Birchfield, has already focused on Senators who have not as yet co-sponsored the Pledge Protection Act which has already passed the House by a wide margin.

Peggy was pretty sure that the majority of Religious Freedom Coalition supporters would place the Pledge Protection Act either near the top or at the top of their agenda. As a result she spent all of August going door to door in the Senate office buildings delivering to Senate offices the petitions you and others had signed. Although the Senators were back in their home states during the August recess, most of their chiefs of staff were still in Washington. This allowed Peggy to talk to many influential staff members.

As a result of Peggy's hard work, two more Senators agreed to co-sponsor the Pledge Protection Act during the August recess. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO) signed on early in August, with Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC) coming on board a few days later.

Even though we only began the Senate Pledge Protection petition program online early this year we already have eighteen (18) co-sponsors, which is nearly one out of every five Senators. In previous years the Pledge Protection Act never had more than four or five co-sponsors!

And there are more results.

Several Senators have responded to the petitions we delivered. We have received letters within the last two weeks from Senators Herb Kohl (R-WI) and Bill Nelson (D-FL). These and other Senators have also written letters directly to those who signed the petitions we delivered to their offices.

As of the issue date of this Chairman's Report the following Senators have agreed to be co-sponsors with Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ), who is the original sponsor of the Pledge Protection Act in the Senate:

Wayne Allard (R-CO)	Sam Brownback (R-KS)
Jim Bunning (R-KY)	Conrad Burns (R-MT)
Richard Burr (R-NC)	Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)
Tom Coburn (R-OK)	Mike Crapo (R-ID)
Jim DeMint (R-SC)	John Ensign (R-NV)
James Inhofe (R-OK)	Trent Lott (R-MS)
Mel Martinez (R-FL)	Richard Shelby (R-OK)
Ted Stevens (R-AK)	James Talent (R-MO)
John Thune (R-SD)	David Vitter (R-LA)

The real surprise to me comes from some of those who have not signed on as co-sponsors. In my home state of Virginia, which is very conservative, Senators George Allen and John Warner have not shown any interest in signing onto the Pledge Protection Act. I find this particularly odd for Senator Allen who is in a tight race for re-election against a former Republican turned Democrat who is a war veteran. My expectation would be for Allen to do as much as he can to show himself pro God and country, but he spends most of his time on the campaign trail telling football analogies about politics.

Democrat Senator Ben Nelson is also in a tight race in Nebraska and he should sign on as well. I am also surprised that neither of the Texas Senators have become co-sponsors.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF RELIGION ACT

The Public Expression of Religion Act (PERA) shared the number one spot in a tie with the Pledge Protection Act in our survey of Religious Freedom Coalition supports. Because of this strong support, we began to work behind the scenes before the Congress returned from the August recess. Because of the high interest level in PERA, it was brought up for a "mark-up" vote on the first day the Judiciary Committee met on their return. On Thursday, September 7, 2006 the full Judiciary Committee voted to pass the bill out to the floor for a vote. This was a "voice vote" and the yeas and nays were not recorded for us to tell you how individual congressmen on the committee voted.

For review, this is what PERA would do if passed:

The bill amends 42 U.S.C. which currently allows parties to sue state and local governments claiming their individual rights were violated and demand attorneys' fees in the case if they win. The ACLU and other liberal groups use this clause to threaten lawsuits claiming cities and towns violated the Establishment Clause of the Constitution by allowing, for example, city council members to pray before meetings. It is the basis for the suit to remove the memorial cross in San Diego, as an example.

As the law is currently written the ACLU is in a win-win situation. They often get results with threats of an expensive lawsuit - and if they actually do file a lawsuit and win, the local government may have to pay them exaggerated legal fees. PERA amends 42 U.S.C. to make it clear that plaintiffs in Establishment Clause cases brought against State and local government can only obtain "injunctive relief." That means if they win, they can force a town to stop a city council prayer, but they do not receive any court costs or legal fees. This will return the status as it was before 42 U.S.C. was passed in 1983.

For the next few weeks that Congress is in session we will focus our efforts on the Pledge Protection Act and the Public Expression of Religion Act. I will report on our progress just after Congress leaves Washington at the end of September to electioneer. I do not expect Congress to convene at any time during October.

INTERNET GAMBLING

The results of our survey came back with a 3.4 on the issue of Internet gambling. At first I had a real interest in this issue until I found out that the Internet Gambling Prohibition Act is being backed and bankrolled by the National Football League (NFL). The NFL has hired a big name lobbying firm to help pass the bill and they are actively recruiting Christian and conservative groups for help with it.

BUT: The NFL has no problem with gambling on their football teams in casinos. In fact, major companies actually pay royalties to the NFL to use team logos and names. The NFL is NOT against sports gambling; it is against sports gambling on the Internet.

Gambling hurts the social fabric of families and of the nation. State run lotteries are nothing more than a tax on poverty because for the most part, only poor people play the lotteries. Gambling should not be legal at any level in a civilized society. I have had a big problem with being recruited by the NFL to fight against Internet gambling on sports so that they can make more money on sports gambling in casinos and sports betting parlors.

We will work to stop sports gambling at the Internet level, AND at the local level as well!

UNBORN CHILD PAIN AWARENESS ACT

This bill requires that those performing late-term abortions inform each woman seeking an abortion about the medical evidence that her unborn child will feel pain. Further, she must be told that if she chooses to continue with the abortion procedure, there is the option of administering anesthesia to the unborn child so that the pain will be less severe. It rated number three in our survey, and we will work with pro-life groups to pass it in the few weeks remaining.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

I added the Senate and House versions of "Immigration Reform" to the survey because of the huge number of letters and calls I receive from supporters about illegals. The results were so lopsided it surprised even me. Out of a possible 0 to 5 the Senate "amnesty" version of immigration reform did not even rate a one (1). The Senate version received a 0.9 while the House version received a 4.7.

The Senate version would allow everyone who broke the law to get into the United States to stay here, and would give them special benefits and privileges not allowed to American citizens. For example, any false income tax returns would be forgiven. The House version would make all illegals go back to where they came from to get proper work permits before returning to the USA.

When I presented the results of this survey on immigration reform to the Republican leaders they were not surprised. They know the will of the people, it is acting on the will of the people that seems to be the problem.

BOARD MEMBER GOES TO BE WITH THE LORD



Rev. Bob R. Melvin, a good friend and a member of the Board of Directors of the Religious Freedom Coalition went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, September 6, 2006. He was 72 years old.

Besides serving for many years on the Board, he was my family's pastor at Spotswood Baptist Church in Spotsylvania, Virginia. He had served that church since 1978. He was married to his devoted wife, Carol, for 52 years. Brother Bob was a patriotic American who had served his nation in uniform. He was a conservative theologian who was elected as the first president of the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia.

Just prior to his passing he received a letter from President George W. Bush thanking him for his decades of service as a pastor.

REALIGNMENT

During the next few months the Religious Freedom Coalition will be taking certain actions to contain costs and to be more efficient. On November 1, 2006 we will move from our Virginia operations center in Fredericksburg to smaller facilities in Stafford. The size and scope of our Washington, DC office located just a few blocks from the Capitol Building will not change. Please be in prayer for our staff while these changes are taking place. [Click here](#) to make a contribution.

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William J. Murray, Chairman

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