



William J. Murray

# The Chairman's Action Report

Religious  
Freedom  
Coalition

June 23, 2006

## PLEDGE PROTECTION RALLY AND NEWS CONFERENCE



After being introduced by William J. Murray, Senator Kyl led those assembled for the press conference in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

and the very first thing we did in our press conference was to have Senator Kyl lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. (About 20 members of the press attending our rally stood and many of them, but not all, saluted the flag and said the Pledge with us.) Congressman Akin wore one of our "Under God" ties that has the Pledge printed on it. Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), a co-sponsor of the bill, also spoke as did Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ), who is House co-sponsor.

On behalf of his bill Congressman Akin said, "The idea that there is a God, and that God grants rights to humankind and that the essential purpose of government is to protect these rights is a fundamental principle. It is also a principle that is central to our Nation's Declaration of Independence. Congress must take positive steps to protect the freedom of Americans to express their allegiance to this principle."

Besides myself, the RFC had also invited speakers from other groups supporting the Pledge Protection Act, including Lanier Swann of Concerned Women for America and Jessica Echard of Eagle Forum. The news conference generated numerous stories on radio, Internet, printed press and TV outlets.

The Upper Senate Park can only be reserved by members of Congress and as a result, holding a press conference there is very prestigious. The national media always attends press conferences at this location because they know congressmen and Senators will be present.

On Flag Day, June 14, 2006 the Religious Freedom Coalition organized a large rally and news conference in the Upper Senate Park across the street from the Capitol Building. Both of the original sponsors of the Pledge Protection Act, Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) in the Senate, and Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO) in the House, spoke at this major event on Capitol Hill held in Upper Senate Park.

Just before our event was one held by Senator Ted Kennedy in which he denounced an anti-flag burning law that is endorsed by veterans. Kennedy's office had placed two American flags behind the Senator. We placed our flag in front and to the right of the podium,



Photographer (bottom) snaps picture of William Murray, Senator Brownback and Congressman Akin just prior to the news conference

## COMMITTEE STALLS PLEDGE PROTECTION ACT

We had been promised by members of the congressional leadership that the vote on the Pledge Protection Act would come on Flag Day, June 14th, but that did not occur. This was not the fault of the Leadership but rather a problem in the House Judiciary Committee. On Wednesday, June 7th, the "markup" began on [Congressman Todd Akin's Pledge Protection Act](#) (HR 2389) in the Judiciary Committee chaired by [Congressman James Sensenbrenner](#) (R-WI) but was not completed.

We have now been informed by the Judiciary Committee staff that the bill should be reported out before the July 4th recess and that a vote can be expected immediately thereafter. Also, the House Leadership has been informed that the Pledge Protection Act should be completed at the committee level and passed out to the floor of the House before July 4th. Have you signed the petition to help?

## THE COURTS

### NEWDOW LOST ONE

Atheist Michael Newdow has been attacking the religious heritage of our nation in more ways than one and in more than one court. Besides his second attempt at removing "under God" from the Pledge, he also filed a lawsuit to remove "In God We Trust" from our currency. In a strange turn of events a court in California actually ruled against him. Judge Frank Damrell of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, held that "In God We Trust" is secular in nature and use, and its appearance on coins and currency does not show government coercion on behalf of monotheism.

Atheist Newdow has vowed to appeal. Unfortunately that appeal will be to the "Nutty Ninth" as it is referred to on Capitol Hill. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals may very well agree with Newdow and the issue of "In God We Trust" on your money may well head to the Supreme Court.)

## THE NATION

### OH OKLAHOMA!

On Friday, June 9th I was driving on I-35 north and was startled when I crossed over the Red River that separates Texas from Oklahoma. At exit one in Oklahoma is a giant Winstar Casino with a parking lot for thousands of cars. The casino has hundreds of slot machines, blackjack and Texas "hold 'em" tables as well as sports betting. A few miles up the Interstate from the casino I stopped into a gas station to buy a Pepsi. I was shocked to find over half of the convenience store packed with slot machines. "This is Oklahoma," I thought to myself.

For many years I had spoken at churches and Christian schools all over Oklahoma. To me the image of Oklahoma was its churches and many Christian universities and Bible colleges. As I drove further north I encountered even larger casinos under construction. While constructed on Indian land, all are operated by international gambling corporations. They were authorized by a referendum pushed by the current Democrat governor of Oklahoma who claims to be a Baptist. He promised the people of Oklahoma \$200 million a year from the casinos for "education." The state is getting less than \$20 million a year, which probably does not cover the cost of extra police, police stations and jails from the crime increase caused by the casinos.



**William and Nancy Murray with Congressman Istook and his wife Judy**

My heart was broken seeing these large casinos all over Oklahoma and I expressed that to my close friend Congressman Ernest who is running for governor of Oklahoma. Over a period of more than a decade I have worked with Congressman Istook on numerous social conservative projects on Capitol Hill. Back in 1994 I began working with him on the Religious Freedom Amendment to the Constitution which would restore prayer to our public schools and protect the religious heritage of our nation. After several years of work we were able to bring the Amendment to a vote in the House where we obtained a majority, but not the 2/3 vote required for a Constitutional Amendment.

Congressman Istook continues to work with us on numerous projects and is one of the co-sponsors of the Pledge Protection Act. This act would protect the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. He cannot run for both governor and Congress which means that he will not be back to Capitol Hill in 2007 and we will really miss him and his devoted wife, Judy.

## **THE PRESIDENT**

### **BROADCAST DECENCY**

Religious Freedom Coalition's Executive Director, Peggy Birchfield participated in the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act (S.193) bill-signing ceremony at the White House on Thursday morning, June 15, 2006. The new law raises indecency fines ten fold to \$325,000 per incident in hopes that television and radio will change for the better under the new law. "In recent years broadcast programming has too often pushed the bounds of decency," Bush said at the White House bill-signing ceremony. "Language is becoming coarser during the times when it's more likely children will be watching television. It's a bad trend, a bad sign." This is the fourth bill signing or other event attended by RFC staff at the White House this year.

### **ON A ROLL**

President George W. Bush has seen his poll numbers rise over the last month as the negative factors of gas prices, immigration and the Iraq war seem to be moving to the back of the minds of Americans. Most have accepted the price of gas at around \$3.00 realizing it is less than half of that paid in Europe. Immigration legislation has been placed on the back burner as Congress simply refuses to deal with it, and there have been great successes in Iraq including the killing of the murderous outlaw and slayer of innocent women and children, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Peggy Birchfield said that when she shook hands with President Bush at the signing of the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act he was in high spirits and seemed refreshed from his trip to Iraq.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **VBS UP AND RUNNING IN HOLY LAND**

The Vacation Bible School (VBS) sponsored by the Religious Freedom Coalition under the leadership of Gary Gordon is up and running in Beit Jala just outside of Jerusalem. The Vacation Bible School will operate from Hope School in Beit Jala for most of June.

This is the first year in many years that I have not personally gone to the Holy Land to distribute funds to children attending Christian Schools in Palestinian Authority controlled areas such as Bethlehem.

Gary Gordon, acting on my behalf, will distribute funds to the children of needy Christian families so that they will be able to attend Christian schools rather than the Palestinian Authority schools which teach anti-Semitism and hatred of America. A full report on the success of the Vacation Bible School and the distribution of funds will be issued in early July. For more information on this project please go to [www.thebethlehemproject.org](http://www.thebethlehemproject.org)

## **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY ON CAPITOL HILL**

Religious Freedom Coalition's staff participated in Religious Freedom Day on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, June 20, 2006. The event took place in the Dirksen Senate Building in the Capitol complex and was attended by many in the media and by some of our friends who were visiting Washington. Speakers at the event included myself, the US Ambassador to the United Nations, John R. Bolton, Senator Norm Coleman (R-MN), Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), House Majority Whip Roy Blunt and Congressman Trent Franks.

I both participated in and moderated a panel discussing "Emerging Issues: Anti-Conversion & Blasphemy Laws". On the same panel with me were Paul Marshall of the Center for Religious Freedom and Dr. Walid Phares of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracy. The purpose of the entire event was to highlight the plight of tens of millions around the world who face repression because of their religious beliefs. Nowhere is this repression more apparent than in atheistic China and in the Islamic nations of the world.

RFC materials on the Bethlehem Project and our White Papers from our mission trips to Kosovo, the West Bank and other areas of the world were distributed. Religious Freedom Day was sponsored by Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) and the Religious Freedom Working Group on Capitol Hill. The Religious Freedom Coalition is a member of that working group.

## **ISRAEL**

On Friday, June 9th the Fourth Annual Christian - Israel Solidarity event was held at the Embassy of Israel in Washington, DC. Although I was a part of the Host Committee for the event I could not attend because I was traveling in Texas and Oklahoma. Members of the Host committee included Gary Bauer, Pat Boone, Richard Land, Janet Parshall, Pastor Ted Haggard, Pastor John Hagee and others. Our Executive Director, Peggy Birchfield represented our organization this year.

The event featured three key note speakers including Gary Bauer, Pastor Ted Haggard and Pastor John Hagee. In a private meeting prior to the main event the Host committee met with Israeli Ambassador Daniel Ayalon and his wife Anne. Because I was not present our executive director, Peggy Birchfield, attended the private meeting. All present expressed their support for an independent and secure Israel and thanked the Ambassador and his wife for their work with the Christian community in the United States.

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William J. Murray, Chairman