

December 18, 2006

THE WAR ON CHRISTMAS

Merchants, particularly the big box retailers like Wal-mart, Target and the rest, really don't want to celebrate Christmas. What they really want is a retail holiday season that is strictly secular, the way Christmas is celebrated in Europe. In Finland the entire holiday celebration centers around Santa Claus, and businesses shut down for three or four days beginning about noon on Christmas Eve.

The big retail businesses in the United States are for the most part run by country club types who think they are too educated and too sophisticated to accept the reality of Jesus Christ. Paul, in Romans wrote of this foolishness:

Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (ROM 1:22-23)

Christmas has become not about Jesus, but an image of corruptible men and women who will do violence to each other to obtain the meaningless toys of this Earth. One young man, a college student, was killed by police as they tried to arrest him for stealing Sony Play Stations. His life, and perhaps his soul, was lost for an electronic game.

Every Christmas morning before a single gift is opened, I first read the Christmas story from the book of Luke to every family member present, both adult and child. If you have a tradition in your home to give gifts, I urge you to consider reading the true Christmas story from Luke, chapter two.

THE BITTER END OF THE 109th

UNBORN VICTIMS OF PAIN

Babies in the womb suffer incredible pain from the knife of the abortionist when they are aborted past 20 weeks. By the 20th week the nerve endings have extended to the skin. When a wanted fetus is operated on in the womb by an experienced surgeon, it is first given anesthesia. If a child that is to live receives pain killers, should not one doomed to die by the mother have even the opportunity not to feel the pain of the death blow?

That is the purpose of the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act that was voted on in the House just before Republican control ended. The bill went straight to the floor on December 6, 2006 and failed even though a majority of 250 congressmen voted for it and only 162 against. Because the Republican leadership brought the bill directly to the floor under "suspension rules" a 2/3rds vote was needed for passage. The bill received about 60%.

This will be the last pro-life bill to be voted on in the House for at least two years. The new Speaker the 110th Congress, Nancy Pelosi, is a pro-abortion Catholic. While she has five children herself, she wants to see other people's children die at the abortionist's hand. She has already made commitments to the abortion industry to reward them for their financial support in the elections.

HONORING HENRY HYDE



Congressman Henry Hyde of Illinois did not run for reelection this year, or he would have won. He has served in the House for 32 years, and during that time was the number one pro-life advocate. Whether the House was controlled by Democrats or Republicans, he pushed legislation to protect the unborn. During one of the last days of the Republican controlled 109th Congress, the House voted to pass a resolution naming Room H139 of the Capitol as the “Henry J. Hyde Room.” The room is in the actual Capitol Building and I have met there several times with Tom DeLay while he was Majority Leader. Many thousands of men and women have served in the House, but very few have been so honored as to have a room in the Capitol Building named after them. Having worked with this wonderful and gentle man for decades in the pro-life movement I can honestly say that no current member deserves the honor as much as he.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2006

UNDER GOD IN THE PLEDGE

In 2005 at the beginning of the 109th Congress the Religious Freedom Coalition began a campaign to protect the words “under God” in the Pledge. Our efforts were spurred by a new lawsuit filed by atheist Michael Newdow to have “under God” removed from the Pledge. Previously one of his lawsuits had been dismissed by the Supreme Court because he did not have “standing.” He had brought the lawsuit in the name of his daughter whom he did not even have custody of, a daughter who was in fact a born-again believer. The new law suit has been joined by atheist parents in California who have children in public school, and a Federal judge has already ruled that an area of California under his jurisdiction must stop using the words “under God.”

In 2005 and 2006 with the help of Congressman Todd Akin’s office we delivered more than 100,000 petitions to specific congressmen and as a result there were almost 200 congressmen co-sponsoring the Pledge Protection Act before it was voted on. The Pledge Protection Act passed the House on July 19, 2006 with a lopsided vote of 260 to 167, including 39 Democrats to whom we had presented petitions, voting with Republicans to protect the Pledge! We worked hard to have the bill passed in the Senate as well, but a liberal Senator had a “hold” on our legislation and it was not voted on. In the process of working to protect the Pledge of Allegiance, we educated hundreds of thousands of Americans as well as congressmen and Senators. Although we did not pass the bill this year our efforts to pass it, even facing a Democrat controlled Congress, have increased.

OTHER LEGISLATION

As I mentioned in the last edition of the Chairman’s Report, we had thirteen major victories in the 109th Congress for pro-family legislation. These included the Fetal Farming Prohibition Act and a vote to block atheists from removing a cross from the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial. We even managed to stop funding for a Gay and Lesbian Center in California that had been authorized by HUD (Housing and Urban Development) . Many bills were passed by the House that were pro-family such as the Pledge Protection Act that unfortunately never received a vote in the Senate. One such bill was the Public Expression of Religion Act (PERA) that would have stopped the practice of allowing the ACLU to collect legal fees from the government every time they file an anti-God lawsuit to stop public prayer or to tear down a cross. PERA was authored by Congressman John Hostettler of Indiana who was one of the victims of the Republican defeat in November.

THE SUPREME COURT

JUSTICE ALITO

I have not seen a firestorm in Washington as great as the one over the nomination by President Bush of Justice Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court. This was one of the most important changes in the Court in decades. In 2005 John Roberts took the place of long time Chief Justice William Rehnquist. While there was battle over his confirmation, victory was far easier for Roberts than for Alito. Roberts was replacing a fellow conservative, but Samuel Alito was nominated to replace a “moderate” who had voted pro-abortion more than once. Samuel Alito is a conservative Catholic.

Although the Religious Freedom Coalition could not work directly on the nomination, the Religious Freedom Action Coalition which I also chair, could and did. The RFAC supplied the pro- Alito T-shirts for volunteers who came to Washington from around the country. The T-shirts were not only shown on national TV but had a profound effect on the Alito family. During one of the confirmation hearings Mrs. Alito was so overwhelmed with the unjust criticism of her husband that she began to cry and left the hearing room. After leaving the room Mrs. Alito went to a window at the end of hall and looked down to see volunteers wearing the bright red T-shirts embossed with ALITO A+. She told our Executive Director Peggy Birchfield at a White House reception later that seeing those Alito A+ T-shirts helped her overcome the gloom of the day and cheered her up so much that she regained her composure and was able to return to the hearings. A photo gallery of our participation in the White House event to formally swear in Justice Alito can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.pixagogo.com/0005465220>



William J. Murray chats with Supreme Court Associate Justice Samuel Alito in the Red Room of the White House

THE WHITE HOUSE

EVENTS - GOOD AND BAD



Peggy Birchfield, William and Nancy Murray in White House south lawn

To be honest I am often surprised at the number of times that I and other members of the Religious Freedom Coalition team are invited to the White House for bill signings and other events considering some of my very vocal criticism of the President's policies. In April and May of this year I fought hard against the Senate immigration bill supported by President George W. Bush. The 600 page bill would have pardoned all illegal aliens from punishment for violating 31 different laws, including the use of fraudulent Social Security cards and numbers. The bill also stated that no corporation would be punished for violating any law related to hiring illegals. Despite my harsh criticism the White House invited myself, my wife and our Executive Director Peggy Birchfield to the signing of a bill making the President's pro-family tax cuts permanent in June.

Including the formal swearing in ceremony of Supreme Court justice Samuel Alito, members of the staff of the Religious Freedom Coalition were invited to more than twenty events at the White House in 2006 including eight with the President himself. Why us? Because we are here in Washington, DC. Our office is just seven blocks from the Capitol Building while most conservative groups are headquartered in places like Colorado and Mississippi. We were notified of the swearing in of Samuel Alito the night before the event. The White House simply knows that we are one of the conservative groups that are active in Washington, DC and can actually come to events.

INTERNATIONAL

BETHLEHEM

While we continue to fight for the religious freedom of Christians in the United States we cannot forget those who are repressed throughout the world, particularly in Islamic nations. What is happening to Christians in places like Indonesia and Pakistan should raise alarms for all Christians, but the condition of Christians in the birthplace of Jesus should make us cry.

For a decade I have been traveling to and supporting Christian schools in Bethlehem. Now that Bethlehem is out of the control of Israel and directly administered by the Palestinian Authority, the condition of Christians there has deteriorated greatly. Hundreds of Christian businesses have been closed and most of the stands selling Nativity scenes and crosses around the Church of the Nativity are now operated by Muslims. Christian children have been murdered in the public schools. We must do our best to keep what Christian children remain in Bethlehem, in Christian schools where they are not forced to study Islam.

To save funds for the use of the Christian children I did not return to Bethlehem this year. The Vacation Bible School held at Hope School in Beit Jala was directed by Gary Gordon who also took RFC cash donations to distribute to the Christian families with children most in need.

ISRAEL, KOSOVO AND THE SUDAN

One of the responsibilities we have as a Washington, DC based Christian organization is to host our friends from overseas as they come to Washington. During 2006 we twice held conferences and meetings to expose the persecution and intimidation of Christians in Kosovo, which is under the United Nations mandate. On both occasions the Orthodox Bishop of Kosovo flew to Washington to speak with members of Congress.

We also hosted Professor Justice Weiner of Israel who has written books on the persecution of Christians and the illegal land grabs by Muslims in Samaria and particularly in Bethlehem. We arranged private meetings for him with congressmen and Senators. We did the same for our good friend Mayor Ron Nachman of Ariel, the largest Jewish settlement in Samaria (the West Bank.) We also arranged for evangelist David Ortiz and his wife Leah of Ariel to meet with Senator Sam Brownback and several other Senators and congressmen to explain the real situation of Christians in the West Bank.

As I reported in the November 8th edition of the Chairman's Report, I traveled to the war torn Sudan this year to meet with the man accused of murdering hundreds of thousands of Christians in the Southern Sudan. I met face to face with him at his home in a Sudanese army base in Khartoum.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2007

Now that Nancy Pelosi and the rest of the secularist San Francisco-type liberals will be running the Congress, our job of helping with pro-family legislation will be made that much harder. Because the leadership will be against us, we will have to place greater reliance on petitions, particularly to "conservative" Democrats. In the international arena we will continue to work for the freedom and the well being of Christians in Islamic nations, particularly the children in Bethlehem.

Please pray for our ministry to the Congress and the White House and as this year ends, please help us financially to work for religious freedom for Christians both here and abroad.

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William J. Murray, Chairman