



William J. Murray

# The Chairman's Action Report

Religious  
Freedom  
Coalition

March 9, 2006

## **“UNDER GOD” PLEDGE PETITIONS DELIVERED**

Over the past two weeks I have personally visited the offices of several congressmen to talk about Congressman Todd Akin’s Pledge Protection Act. The congressional visits have been to two distinct groups. First we are visiting the offices of congressmen who are in their first term in the 109th Congress and who have not as yet co-sponsored the bill despite the fact that their predecessor was a co-sponsor in the 108th Congress. Getting appointments and sitting down with either a congressman or his chief of staff is difficult during an election year when the Congress is taking a one week recess each month. Yet, we have had some success.

Two weeks ago we visited with the staff of Congressman Geoff Davis (R-KY) and explained to his Legislative Director how the bill would protect the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance. Within a few days Congressman Davis signed on as a co-sponsor. This week we visited with Congressman Michael McCaul’s (R-TX) office and received a positive response. We believe he will be signed on as a co-sponsor shortly. We have visited other new congressmen who seemed receptive, but we are not certain they will be sponsors.

At the same time we are encouraging those who are already co-sponsors to take a more active role in supporting the Pledge Protection Act by helping us work with their friends in Congress who have not signed on. To that end we visited in the last week with Congressmen Walter Jones (R-NC), Peter King (R-NY) Lincoln Davis (D-TN), Spencer Bachus (R-AL), Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL), Gil Gutknecht (R-MN) and Ken Hulshof (R-MO). All of their offices welcomed the encouragement of the petitions directed toward them and promised to help in passing the Pledge Protection Act.

On Thursday, March 2nd, our Executive Director Peggy Birchfield tracked down and talked to a legislative aide to the new Majority Leader, John Boehner (R-OH), about the Pledge Protection Act. The Majority Leader has not stepped forward on any social conservative issues since beating out Roy Blunt (R-MO) for the job. In his current position as Majority Whip, Roy Blunt has pledged his 100% support of the Pledge Protection Act.

While we have many thousands of petitions which have been returned to us, we are holding off on delivering them to certain congressmen until we have a larger number directed toward them. There are certain key Democrats we believe we can win over, but we don’t want to walk into their offices until we have several thousand petitions addressed to them. It is for this reason that our petition drive is targeted rather than random.

Let me explain: At first we sent petitions to conservative Christians in all 50 states seeking signatures. We now have on hand signed petitions for all 455 congressmen! Now, we have begun to target certain congressional districts to get more petitions just for congressmen who have not signed on as co-sponsors, or for congressmen who are under pressure from the other side to withdraw support. This targeting method is costly. It costs us \$35,000 for every 100,000 petitions we mail, but we are mailing them to individuals in those districts we believe will respond. This is actually cheaper than mailing blank petitions willy-nilly into a district, to everyone including secularists and non-Christians.

## **THE SENATE**

### **MARRIAGE VOTE SCHEDULED**

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) has set the first week of June for debate and vote on the Marriage Protection Amendment which was authored by Senator Sam Brownback (R-MO). This is not a bill, but rather an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States which would declare marriage in the United

States as being between one man and one woman. Because this is an Amendment to the Constitution, it would bring an end to the lawsuits demanding homosexual and polygamous marriages. I do not expect this to pass because 60 votes are needed and the homosexual lobby has the support of virtually every Democrat as well as a handful of Northeastern Republicans such as Senator Lincoln Chaffee. Our staff will work on the Hill during May to win votes. Those who believe that traditional marriage between one man and one woman should be protected by the Constitution should start calling their Senators now!

## **THE DEATH TAX**

Majority Leader Frist has also announced that he plans on a final vote to "bury the death tax" within the next two months. This is an effort led by my good friend Jim Martin, president of the seniors' organization 60 Plus, whom I have lunch with nearly every week. Indeed, Jim was the man who coined the phrase "death tax" to describe the inheritance tax. Men and women work all their lives to build up an estate, all the while paying income and other taxes. Despite the fact that they have paid income tax on their earnings, a huge part of their savings is taken from their estate when they die. It is a double taxation that is hard to fight when you are dead. Anyone who has worked hard and saved well looks forward to the demise of the death tax. Some may think that this is not a social issue, but it is. The death tax is an attack on the family and it takes away educational and other benefits from grandchildren and great grandchildren.

We will need 60 votes in the Senate to kill the death tax, not just 51 because key Democrats intend a filibuster. For some reason the Democrats believe as a matter of policy that inheritance should not be passed down from one generation to the next. One of those leading the fight to keep the death tax is Senator Ted Kennedy, who has inherited many millions of dollars himself. The death tax does not really affect those leaving giant multi-million dollar estates, but rather harms those who have farms and small businesses to pass along to children. We will work with 60 Plus and other groups to help Bill Frist pass legislation to end the death tax.

## **THE HOUSE**

### **MARRIAGE LEGISLATION AND AMENDMENT**

While the Senate plans to vote directly on a Constitutional Amendment to protect traditional marriage, the House is taking a different approach. The Amendment offered by Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO) has not even been entered in the 109th Congress and may not be until later this year. In both the House and the Senate a two-thirds majority vote is required for passage of a Constitutional Amendment. More than fifty Democrats in the House would have to vote for the Amendment, which is not likely. The House Leadership has, therefore, decided to first submit legislation to protect marriage. Two bills will be voted on in the House to "test the waters" on the Amendment and also record the votes of those opposed to traditional marriage.

The two bills offered are Congressman Hostettler's Marriage Protection Act and Congressman Istook's legislation, the Definition of Marriage Act. Congressman Istook's bill would define marriage for all other legislative purposes while that of Congressman Hostettler is a jurisdiction act that restricts the courts from finding that marriage is anything other than between one man and one women.

### **PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF RELIGION**

Congressman John Hostettler's (R-IN) Public Expression of Religion Act is moving forward. The bill would deny the ACLU and other liberal groups the attorney fees they now get paid by state and local governments when they bring forward church-state lawsuits. Under the provisions of the bill, the ACLU would have to pay for the lawsuits they file. Since the main business of the ACLU is blackmail and greenmail resulting in outrageous settlements for legal fees, the organization's finances would be greatly hurt. Your congressman needs to hear your opinion on this legislation.

## INTERNATIONAL

### RFC BRINGS HUMAN RIGHTS ATTORNEY TO CAPITOL HILL

Professor Justus Weiner is a scholar in residence at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs in Israel, and I have visited his office on many occasions. As a human rights attorney and professor he has a keen interest in fighting against persecution. Although he lives in Jerusalem, he was unaware of the persecution of Christians in nearby Bethlehem until eight years ago when full time evangelist David Ortiz brought several instances to his attention. The David Ortiz ministry, which is supported by the Religious Freedom Coalition, is located in Ariel, Israel.



**Senator Sam Brownback  
and Professor Weiner**

Following up on these instances of persecution Justus Weiner began writing White Papers for various prestigious journals about the condition of Christians in the West Bank. This week Justus Weiner visited Washington, DC and spoke at several events including some organized by the Religious Freedom Coalition. We were also able to arrange an appointment for him with Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS).

A private lunch was also arranged for Weiner at the Capitol Hill Club that was attended by religious leaders and congressmen. Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ) spent some time with Professor Weiner and may read his new book, *Human Rights of Christians in the Palestinian Society*, dealing with the persecution of Christians, into the Congressional Record. Professor Weiner also spoke to numerous social conservative groups while in Washington. Eyes were opened as this scholar disclosed what the liberal media in the United States hides, persecution of Christians in Muslim dominated areas.

Every year the RFC raises funds for Christian children to attend Christian schools in the Bethlehem area which is now controlled by the Islamic Palestinian Authority. Normally I travel to Bethlehem in July or August to distribute those funds. If you are a new supporter of the Religious Freedom Coalition I urge you to visit the special Internet site we have set up just for our Bethlehem work. The site can be found at [www.TheBethlehemProject.org](http://www.TheBethlehemProject.org). At that site you will be able to find the names of the schools we have supported as well as see photographs of the children we gave scholarship funds to last year. Contributions to the project can be made at the site.

### OUR PORTS AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

President George W. Bush is a sincere individual whom I greatly admire. He truly believes, as do I, that liberty is a gift from God and not a privilege granted by government. The God both he and I worship, however, is far different from Islam's god, who still demands the blood sacrifice of infidels. The concept of individual liberty is foreign to Islam and there is no true Arabic translation for the English word "liberty."

While I believe in my heart that the President is right and that every human being on the planet deserves the God given gift of freedom, I do not believe that we can achieve that goal by compromising our own freedoms. Dubai World Ports is owned by a holding company called PCZC which in turn is owned by the government of the United Arab Emirates which is an Islamic kingdom. The PCZC position of honoring a boycott of Israel is contrary to the principles of democracy and the free trade position that this Administration supports and as a result this deal should go down in flames sooner rather than later.

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING BRIEFING

RFC's Peggy Birchfield participated in the Trafficking in Persons Report briefing held by the U.S. State Department on Thursday, February 23, 2006. Representatives of RFC and several other NGO's met with Ambassador John Miller and other State Department officials to continue to develop stronger programs to combat human trafficking. President Bush signed the 2005 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act at the White House on January 10, 2006. The updated law mandates new minimum standards for a country's ratings in the TIP Report (Trafficking in Persons).

The new standards include an evaluation of government efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex, and new methods to ensure that peace keepers do not engage in human trafficking, and to prevent forced and child labor. Approximately 800,000 to 900,000 victims are annually trafficked across international borders worldwide. Victims include runaway children, children who are "sold" to traffickers by their parents, as well as young women who mistakenly believe they are being taken to another country to work at legitimate jobs. RFC is working to see that modern day slavery is prevented, victims are protected and that the traffickers are put in jail.

## THE COURTS

### ABORTION AND ALITO

The abortion issue is coming to the Supreme Court much faster than anyone anticipated, after the addition of Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Sam Alito. A case involving the Partial Birth Abortion Ban signed into law by President George Bush has been accepted by the Supreme Court for review. A Federal District Court had ruled in favor of abortion activists, saying the law was unconstitutional. U.S. Attorney General Gonzales will argue the merits of the law before the Court. Opponents of "any time, any place" abortion are delighted that the Supreme Court with the addition of Justice Alito will hear the case. Our sister organization, the Religious Freedom Action Coalition was instrumental in assisting in the confirmation of Justice Sam Alito. Some of the red T-shirts worn by pro-Alito volunteers are still available at [www.rfcaction.org](http://www.rfcaction.org).



**William J Murray and  
Justice Samuel Alito**

### RFC NEWS

### RFC BOARD MEMBER WITH THE LORD



**Rev. David Buttram**

Rev. David Buttram, a long time member of the Religious Freedom Coalition Board of Directors and a widely respected Christian leader, has gone to be with the Lord. Rev. Buttram was also the President of the Gospel Tract Society of Independence, Missouri. David had been involved in my ministry efforts for more than two decades and during that time I watched as he valiantly struggled with numerous health problems including acute diabetes. Despite those physical problems he had made over 40 mission trips to Haiti where his ministry maintained a presence. He was a lifelong member of the Assemblies of God and a Sunday School teacher at his church.

On several occasions he donated the use of the presses of the Gospel Tract Society to print large quantities of material for distribution by the Religious Freedom Coalition. He had been faithful in attending our Board meetings and remained faithful to our cause. He was scheduled to go on a retreat with myself and other Board members in January when he was taken ill. He passed away on January 24, 2006. He is survived by his wife Beth and two brothers, Thomas and Phillip.

## WEEKLY UPDATES

Our Internet site at [www.rfcnet.org](http://www.rfcnet.org) has an average of over 150,000 visits per month. About 5% of those are from people using a US government site and about 6% are military personnel. This is a tremendous interest in our material shown by government sources. Some of the material in this Chairman's Report appears earlier at the Internet site and is then expanded and updated before it appears here.

William J. Murray, Chairman

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