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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Tuition Tax Credits Go Down  
To Lopsided Senate Defeat

By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Reagan's tuition tax credit proposal went down to decisive defeat in the U.S. Senate Nov. 16 and the issue appears dead for this Congress.

After Senate opponents of the measure put on a show of strength in a two-day filibuster, they agreed to allow the tuition tax credit bill to come to a vote. They won, 59-38.

The proposal, pushed by Reagan since the 1980 presidential election campaign, would have made partial reimbursement for tuition expenses to parents who send their children to private and parochial schools. Of these, approximately 85 percent are church-related. The benefit would have amounted to a \$100 credit for tax year 1983, \$200 for 1984 and \$300 when fully implemented in 1985.

The tax credit would have gone only to families with taxable income under \$50,000 and would have been denied to parents whose children attend racially discriminatory schools. But estimates of its potential three-year cost to the federal treasury ran as high as \$3 billion.

Debate on the politically volatile proposal focused on public policy questions as well as on church-state implications. Baptist bodies, including the Southern Baptist Convention and several state conventions, have repeatedly opposed tuition tax credits for both church-state and public policy reasons.

Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs Executive Director James M. Dunn hailed the Senate vote as "a victory for the constitutional principle of church-state separation, for common sense in shaping public policy and for the consensus long held by Americans that public monies should not support private and parochial schools."

Dunn, whose agency has made defeat of tuition tax credits its primary legislative objective in recent years, added: "We are grateful to grassroots Baptists who communicated effectively with their senators." Dunn had special praise for Senators David L. Boren, D-Okla., Ernest F. Hollings, D-S.C., John H. Chafee, R-R.I., Lawton Chiles, D-Fla., and Lloyd M. Bentsen, D-Texas, who, Dunn said, "led in the defeat of this bad idea."

Boren, who formerly taught government at Oklahoma Baptist University, labeled the White House argument that tuition tax credits would provide simple "equity" to parents by giving them a choice between private and public schools "absolute and sheer nonsense." He also argued the credits would be detrimental to private schools themselves, because "ultimately federal controls have always followed federal dollars."

Hollings blasted the administration for pushing the bill at a time when federal budget deficits approach \$200 billion annually. The proposal would "rip a revenue hemorrhage in the economic fabric," he declared, "leading the way to a higher deficit." Hollings concluded: "This is a rip-off for the rich and everyone knows it."

Chafee, one of 24 Republicans who abandoned Reagan on the vote, called the public school system "one of our nation's greatest strengths" and declared: "We must not undermine it by subsidizing a second school system."

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Despite Reagan's longstanding and outspoken support for the tax credits, the unexpected size of the defeat of his bill left many on Capitol Hill questioning whether he went all out in pushing it. Among these was the bill's Republican floor manager, Kansas' Robert Dole, who told reporters after the vote the administration "has a lot of work to do" in both the Senate and the House of Representatives before tuition tax credits can be passed.

An aide to one of the key opponents offered the view that while Reagan went through the motions of supporting the measure, he and his Senate allies, including Dole, seemed to do so "half-heartedly." He added an eleventh-hour White House meeting of Reagan with key Senate supporters of the bill amounted to a "horse-and-pony show."

Nevertheless, administration officials appeared to believe they had a chance to pull an upset when Vice President George Bush showed up on the Senate floor to preside over the final moments of the debate and be present for the vote. As presiding officer of the Senate, the vice president votes only to break ties.

"We're glad he wasn't needed today," Dunn said.

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North Carolina Baptists  
Elect Wiggins President

By Gene Puckett

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GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP)--Norman Wiggins, president of Campbell University, was elected president of the North Carolina Baptist Convention after messengers decided the question of two conflicting articles in the convention's constitution.

Messengers overwhelmingly decided to follow Article 8, which says the president is only an ex-officio member (with voting rights) on the general board and allowed Wiggins to be nominated. Article 9 says no person whose salary, either in part or totally, is paid by Cooperative Program money can be a member of the board of directors for an agency, institution or the state general board.

Campbell University receives funds from the North Carolina convention.

Wiggins then was elected by a margin of 2-1 over A.S. Lineberry Sr., layman from First Baptist Church, Greensboro.

Wiggins is a graduate of Wake Forest University, holds the law degree from Columbia University in New York and has been president of the university at Buies Creek, since 1967. Prior to that he was on the faculty of the law school at Wake Forest University.

The convention later approved a motion to study and revise the constitution to eliminate the contradictions between the two articles.

The most controversial resolution involved the ordination of women. By a 200-vote margin the 1,600 messengers voting on the issue reaffirmed a 1975 resolution which said the ordination of women was entirely a matter of local church decision and the state convention does not have a formal position on the topic.

The first vice president is Dewey Hobbs, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Marion, and immediate past president of the general board of the state convention. The second vice president is William Poe, a Charlotte attorney who is currently the president of Baptist Men of North Carolina. Both vice presidents, like Wiggins, are graduates of Wake Forest University.

The convention approved a basic budget of \$23 million and a challenge budget of \$1.4 million. Of that amount 35.4 percent (up from 35.2 percent) will go the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program.

There were routine resolutions affirming the sanctity of the home, the importance of morality in education, and opposing to parents not being notified when their teenage children still living at home were provided contraceptives and abortions.

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The convention paid respects to Cecil A. Ray who will resign his position as general secretary of the convention December 31 to become the director of the Planned Growth in Giving campaign sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention.

He was presented a cash gift equivalent to the value of the car provided him by the convention. The convention met in an expanded format. The last of six sessions was a missions rally addressed by Lloyd Elder, president-elect of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Approximately 3,900 messengers registered for the 1983 meeting at the Greensboro Civic Center. The 1984 convention will meet Nov. 12-14 at the Asheville Civic Center.

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Georgia Convention  
Observes Quiet Time

Baptist Press  
11/17/83

MACON, Ga. (BP)--One of the quietest annual meetings of the Georgia Baptist Convention in many years saw about 2,200 messengers approve a partnership mission program with Baptists in Liberia and adopt a record Cooperative Program budget for 1984 of \$20.6 million.

Meeting in Macon City Auditorium, messengers also shared in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Mercer University in Macon. They heard Mercer President R. Kirby Godsey, make an appeal for Mercer and Georgia Baptists to "stay together...to make Mercer the center of Baptist higher education in this nation."

The convention also voted to share in the Planned Growth in Giving campaign planned by the Southern Baptist Convention, to increase Cooperative Program giving.

Messengers okayed a three-year set of Bold Mission Thrust goals related to evangelism, church growth and family ministry. They accepted without discussion a long study on future financial needs of Georgia Baptist colleges. The study calls on schools to articulate their purposes more clearly and begs Baptists to support the schools more generously.

Also approved were resolutions opposed to pari-mutuel betting; pornography; lewdness and profanity on cable television; network TV shows which "debase Christian values," and efforts in Georgia to deregulate sale of alcoholic beverages with low alcohol content.

Another resolution called on President Ronald Reagan and the U.S. Congress to "amend the Social Security Act of 1983 to restore voluntary participation on behalf of churches." Yet another resolution urged Southern Baptist Annuity Board to improve its health care insurance programs to cover all ministers and their families. Another urged Georgia General Assembly to raise the legal drinking age in Georgia from 19 to 21.

One messenger wanted the convention to approve a resolution refusing to seat messengers from churches which ordain females to "the preaching ministry." Mrs. Celia Stewart of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Jonesboro brought the resolution, but after meeting twice with the resolutions committee withdrew the resolution, "in the interest of unity and in keeping with the spirit of this convention."

The \$20.6 million Cooperative Program budget for 1984 represents an increase of almost eight percent over 1983. After deduction of about 10 percent in shared promotion and administration expenses, it will be divided equally between Georgia and SBC causes.

Nelson L. Price was reelected to a second term as president. He is pastor of Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta. The 1984 convention meets Nov. 12-14 in City Auditorium in Augusta.

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'Guidelines' Of Belief  
Suggested By President

SALEM, Va. (BP)--James T. Draper Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has suggested the denomination establish "guidelines" to detail what Baptists should believe.

Draper, serving his second term as president of the 13.9 million member denomination, suggested a committee be appointed to draw up "some minimum things" Baptists believe, things about which Baptists would say, "Hey, we're not any of us going to give up these beliefs. We can't go beyond them."

Draper made the suggestion during an afternoon news conference before preaching to the annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia. He raised the possibility of creating a committee to establish the guidelines while answering questions about the bickering between "fundamentalists" and "moderates" that has rocked the nation's largest protestant denomination in recent years.

Draper said after the establishment of limits to what Southern Baptists could believe, "moderates" and "liberals" who could not accept them could leave.

Many Baptists oppose "creedalism," considering creeds a violation of the concept of a "priesthood of the individual believer."

"No matter what they say, Baptists have got a creed--everyone's got a creed", Draper said, adding it is based on the belief the Bible is the Word of God. Draper said he hopes such guidelines would be general enough to satisfy most Southern Baptists.

"We do believe in something," he said. "We have a statement of faith and a confession of faith. They are creedal in a sense...."

Draper cited four things which should be in any guideline of belief. "They are bedrock," he said. "If there are leaders or teachers who find they cannot accept these four things, they ought to leave. Anyone who cannot accept them is not a true Southern Baptist and ought to have the integrity to leave...."

The four include a belief in the full humanity and deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement by Christ for the sins of mankind, justification of God's grace through faith and belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ.

Draper said his list of four "bedrock" items does not include anything about the inerrancy of the Scriptures, a strongly held belief that the Bible, in its original form, contained no errors of any sort. "Inerrancy" has been both a code word and a battle cry in the ongoing strife in the denomination.

Draper, who has been identified with the "inerrancy wing of the denomination, said he would not "demand that they (a committee) use the word inerrancy or infallibility or inspiration. They could use the word authoritative or truthful, but I would not want to make that a tenet. I would not try to make inerrancy an issue. I would not want people debating over terminology."

He said he wants to see any movement for a committee or for guidelines "come from a groundswell" of opinion. He stressed any committee formed to come up with such a set of guidelines should contain a "cross-section" of Baptists.

Draper, previously has said Baptists should have some kind of limits "of how far you can go and still be a Southern Baptist, called in October, for unity around certain guidelines. He added: "We have to set some kind of parameters for Baptist belief. If we don't people will end up believing anything they want."

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(Compiled by Baptist Press from reports by Ed Briggs, religion writer for the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch, and Helen Parmley, religion editor of the Dallas (Texas) Morning News.)

Former State Senator  
Heads Mississippi Baptists

By Tim Nicholas

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Mississippi Baptists elected a former state senator as president and two directors of missions as vice presidents at their convention Nov. 14-16 at First Baptist Church, Jackson.

They also passed a \$16,485,000 Cooperative Program budget of which 35 percent (up from 34.5) will go Southern Baptist Convention causes outside the state and voted to consider a major endowment campaign for their three colleges and their child care facility.

Attorney Charles Pickering, state senator from 1972-80 was elected president. Pickering, a member of First Baptist Church, Laurel, currently is president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Ervin Brown, director of missions for Northwest Baptist Association in Tate and Desoto counties, was elected first vice president and J.C. Refroe, director of missions for Rankin County Baptist Association, was named second vice president.

A constitutional change was approved which specifies a church must have given gifts through the Cooperative Program in the preceding year to qualify for messengers at the annual meeting. The convention also voted to increase the percentage of giving to SBC causes by half of one percent each year through 1990.

A record 1,583 registered messengers voted a convention board and state education commission recommendation to begin a study toward development of an endowment campaign for Mississippi College, Blue Mountain College, William Carey College and the Baptist Children's Village. The committee, to be appointed by Pickering and Executive Secretary Earl Killy, was voted \$200,000 for the study and told to bring recommendations to the 1984 convention.

By resolution, messengers opposed tuition tax credits, lotteries, pornography and the appointment of an United States ambassador to the Vatican; supported raising the legal drinking age to 21; urged black and white congregations to work for harmony among the races, and encouraged Mississippi Baptists to participate in the shaping and supporting of public schools and to seek volunteers with nutrition-related skills to work in the fight against hunger.

The 1984 convention will be Nov. 12-14 at First Baptist Church, Jackson.

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Foreign Mission Offering  
Goal Challenge Issued

Baptist Press  
11/17/83

GREENSBORO, N.C. (BP)--Southern Baptists have been challenged to redouble efforts to meet the original \$66 million goal of the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions.

During the annual meeting of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Wendell G. Davis of Statesville introduced a motion calling on every state convention and every Southern Baptist church to join North Carolina Baptists in "prayer, fasting and sacrifice at such a time as this," to reach the original \$66 million goal. Failure to reach the 1982 giving goal caused the 1983 goal to be reduced to \$60 million.

Davis, in making the motion, challenged every church in the SBC to set a goal equal to \$5 per member. "With our young men giving their lives in Beirut and Grenada and our missionaries putting their lives on the line in 101 countries in the world," he said, "we Southern Baptists must match our sacrifices with theirs."

He made note of the fact 50 cents from each Southern Baptist will make the difference between the reduced goal of \$60,000,000 and \$66,000,000.

In commenting on the action, R. Gene Puckett, editor of the Biblical Recorder, newsjournal of the convention, said: "North Carolina Baptists are challenging every state convention and every church in the SBC to join them in this special effort to reach the original Lottie Moon Offering goal of \$66 million set for this year and are anxious to get this message shared throughout the convention before Dec. 4 when the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions begins.

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