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**Flurry Of Convention Motions
 Creates Avalanche Of Work**

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A flurry of motions presented by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting this summer will result in an avalanche of work for SBC agencies throughout the coming year.

Messengers showered a record 51 motions on the convention during the meeting June 10-12 in Atlanta. Most of those motions were referred to appropriate agencies for action prior to next year's meeting.

"Bylaw 28 of the SBC Constitution directs that any matter which deals with a convention agency's program must be referred to the trustees of that agency," explained Reginald McDonough, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee.

"All of the motions for referral officially are communicated from the president of the Executive Committee to the president of the appropriate agency," added McDonough, who helps coordinate inter-agency relationships within the convention. "Then agency trustees consider the motion, take action they feel is appropriate and report back to the convention the following year. In some instances, referrals become recommendations for full convention action."

The number of motions presented has risen sharply in recent years, observers note. This year's total represents a 27.5 percent increase over the previous high—40 motions in 1985.

McDonough cited a rise in the number of SBC messengers who have attended the past two conventions as a primary reason for the increase. More than 45,000 messengers participated in the Dallas convention in 1985, and almost 41,000 came to Atlanta; the previous high was less than 23,000.

"There also is a greater awareness by messengers of convention bylaws, what they say and how they can be changed," he added. "Messengers who want to see changes realize this is the course they should take."

"People are catching on that this is the way to get things handled," SBC Recording Secretary Martin Bradley elaborated. In response to a motion, "an agency must make some kind of decision—voice a view or perhaps even take action."

This year, as in the past, most of the motion-related action will be taken by the Executive Committee, which received 23 referrals. About half of those relate to the SBC Constitution or its bylaws, supporting McDonough's assertion that awareness of bylaws is a prime factor in the increase of motions.

Among the Executive Committee's referrals are:

--A proposal to "remove the (SBC) from participation in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and establish an exclusive Southern Baptist presence in Washington, D.C., for the purpose of more truly reflecting our views...."

--A suggested change in Bylaw 21 which would limit the SBC president's choices for appointment to the Committee on Committees to four persons from each qualified state convention who have been recommended by that state convention's president.

--Four separate proposals to change Bylaw 16, which provides guidelines for the election of SBC board members, trustees, commissioners or members of standing committees.

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—A move to require each convention messenger to be at least 13 years old.

—A request that the formula for determining how many messengers a church can send to the convention be studied "with the idea of bringing greater parity between the numerical basis and the financial basis."

—Two proposals which would provide guidelines for SBC presidential nominees—one which would require any officer's church to give 10 percent of its total offerings as undesignated gifts to the denomination's Cooperative Program, and another which would designate "after a president leaves office, he is thereafter ineligible for service as...president."

—A request for a study of the feasibility of a Southern Baptist seminary in the Northeast.

—A motion asking for a study of the feasibility of "satellite convention locations."

Among other motions, four were adopted. These include the progress report of the SBC Peace Committee; request of a study by the SBC Annuity Board to provide information on adequate provision for Southern Baptist annuitants; recommendation of the 1986 convention preacher, alternate preacher and music director; and a motion that one messenger's statements "be stricken from the minutes of the convention as being inconsistent with the theme of the convention."

One motion was defeated. It would have limited nominations for membership on the Committee on Boards to "the name, vocation and state of the person doing the nominating and the name, vocation and state of the person being nominated."

Eight motions were referred to persons or groups acting during the annual meeting, such as the Committee on Order of Business and the Resolutions Committee.

Nine motions were referred to SBC agencies. Among those are:

—Two dealing with the Christian Life Commission and abortion.

—A request that the Foreign Mission Board reconsider its policy against appointing deaf persons as missionaries.

—A proposal, referred to all six SBC seminaries, requesting them to adopt a "directional statement" and to require each professor to "sign a statement indicating complete agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message and willingness to teach only in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message."

—A recommendation that SBC agency employees be allowed to serve as convention messengers only if they attend the annual meeting at their own expense or at the expense of their local church or association, referred to each agency.

Two motions were referred to the Peace Committee, one requesting it to conduct a convention-wide survey "concerning theological differences in our convention," and the other asking it to re-open its investigation of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

The increase in motions during SBC annual meetings has prompted some observers to ask how many motions the convention can receive and still function adequately.

From a technical standpoint regarding the annual meeting itself, the situation is not near crisis proportions, Bradley said.

"It's awfully easy to make any motion about an agency's work, and it must be referred," he explained. "There could be 300 motions if you could rattle them off quickly enough. It is hard to say what the saturation point might be." He said a more appropriate question might be, "How many will the messengers tolerate?"

From the standpoint of agencies, the question of saturation and overload "depends on the nature of the motions," McDonough said. "If we get 25 or 30 referrals—all of which require extensive study—year after year, and those began to back up, that could cause problems. But right now, I don't see us reaching a saturation point."

That is good news for the other agencies, since the Executive Committee received 11 times as many referrals as the next-closest agency. So, although they may have to work to dig themselves out, agencies are not likely to be overwhelmed with the avalanche of paperwork the motions caused.

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Board Talks Of World Strategy;
3,050 Cities Now Over 100,000

By Bob Stanley

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RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—Sharing the gospel with all the world will involve outreach to almost twice as many cities of more than 100,000 people as previously thought, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board learned at its June meeting.

Christian researcher David Barrett told board trustees 3,050 cities now have 100,000 or more residents. The total of such cities may reach 5,000 by the end of the century, he added.

The board commissioned Barrett to obtain data on all cities of this size as it seeks to reach an increasingly urban world. The results of his study, which involved two and a half years' research, are expected to be published later this year.

In 1984 the United Nations listed 1,677 cities with 100,000 or more population, Barrett said, but the number continued to grow as he compiled data from both religious and secular sources. The number of megacities, those with a million or more people, has increased from 20 in 1900 to 276 today, he pointed out.

In 1900, Barrett said, only about 2 percent of the world's 1.6 billion population lived in cities of 100,000 or more and only 14 percent could have been considered urban dwellers. Today 27 percent of the world's 5 billion people live in these larger cities and 44 percent are urban dwellers.

The board heard preliminary findings from Barrett's research as it continued an in-depth study of how Southern Baptists can work more effectively in doing their part to take the gospel to all people by the year 2000. This is the overarching goal of Bold Mission Thrust, a comprehensive evangelistic plan adopted in 1976 by the 14.4-million-member denomination.

Board President R. Keith Parks told trustees in February the board must look carefully at all it is doing and work closely with leaders of Baptist groups with which it relates overseas to develop a global strategy if Southern Baptists are to accomplish their Bold Mission Thrust goals.

In dialogue sessions held during Foreign Mission Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, the board identified prayer, partnership and planning as key ingredients in development of a realistic strategy.

"We will not do any more in global evangelization than we are now doing unless there is an intensification of prayer among Southern Baptists," Parks said. Noting every great spiritual movement has started in prayer, he asked trustees to be ready to decide at their next meeting in September whether the board should draw up a prayer covenant as a challenge to all church members in the denomination.

At the suggestion of a trustee, the board pledged to pray especially for each other in the months ahead as the planning process continues.

Southern Baptists have set goals of having 5,000 missionaries overseas by the end of the century, but Parks said no one has really been able to determine what it will cost to support a force of this size. Ten thousand volunteers a year are expected to supplement their work. The denomination is on target on both of these goals, with a present missionary force of about 3,700 and with more than 6,700 volunteers overseas last year.

But the denomination's effort to carry out Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) to take the gospel to all nations takes more than dollars and people, Parks said. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit.

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"The very mandate to engage in a worldwide mission could only be given simultaneously with the gift of the Holy Spirit, for without him it cannot be done," he said, adding Southern Baptists must get under a "prayer burden" if they expect God to use them in winning the people of the world to faith in Jesus Christ.

The willingness to work with other Baptists and other Christians surfaced as a major theme in the board's discussions. A year ago at Ridgecrest, representatives of Baptists from 21 nations initiated the move for cooperative planning at the first global evangelization strategy consultation.

Parks said events of the past year have strengthened his conviction God is leading in this effort. He cited progress made by Baptists in Asia and other areas in starting to plan together as they prepare to send their own missionaries to people of other lands and cultures.

In addition, he said the board has received more than 100 inquiries, ranging across the entire spectrum of Christian organizations, wanting to know more about what the board is doing in planning for global evangelization.

Many of these inquiries came after Parks mailed out copies of "World-Class Cities and World Evangelization," a book by Barrett published earlier this year. Barrett, an Anglican missionary who edited the World Christian Encyclopedia, came to Richmond, Va., on a contractual basis a year ago to assist the board full time in research needed to implement its Bold Mission objective.

In working with other Baptists and other denominations, Parks said, the Foreign Mission Board must never forget its primary purpose is winning people to a saving faith in Christ through evangelism that results in churches.

But he added: "This world is bigger than Southern Baptists. There are Christian groups out there that are doing good things, and there are some others that ought to be doing more. And if God could use us to challenge them to be more aggressively involved in global evangelization, it would be a sin against a lost world and against our Lord not to allow ourselves to be involved in that way."

Better planning may mean the board will need to create a high-level administrative group charged with development of a worldwide strategy, Parks said. But he emphasized that in considering this approach, the board and staff must avoid the impression that "we are suddenly going to begin deciding everything in Richmond."

About 250 letters were received from missionaries on the field offering their suggestions on how global strategy can best be implemented, and Parks underscored the continuing role of missionaries and field mission organizations in helping to shape the work.

Parks said he and other staff members would take the board's input, along with that received earlier from missionaries and staff, and seek prayerfully during the summer months to formulate some specific plans. These will be brought back to the board in September and October for further consideration.

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Supreme Court Upholds
Homosexual Sodomy Laws

By Stan Hasteley

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WASHINGTON (BP)—By the narrowest of margins, the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld laws in 24 states and the District of Columbia imposing criminal penalties on homosexuals convicted of engaging in acts of sodomy.

In a 5-4 opinion written by Justice Byron R. White and released June 30, the high court threw out the claim of Michael Hardwick—an acknowledged practicing homosexual—that Georgia's sodomy law violated his right to privacy. Earlier decisions of the court that invoked privacy rights in such issues as contraception and abortion do not extend to sodomy, White ruled for the majority.

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Referring to the earlier decisions, White wrote that "none of the rights announced in those cases bears any resemblance to the claimed constitutional right of homosexuals to engage in acts of sodomy."

White traced sodomy laws to early American history, noting sodomy was considered a crime in all 13 original colonies. Further, he wrote, until 1961 all 50 states outlawed such acts. "Against this background, to claim that a right to engage in such conduct is 'deeply rooted in this nation's history and tradition' or 'implicit in the concept of ordered liberty' is, at best, facetious," White concluded.

Nor are laws forbidding homosexual sodomy invalidated by the argument such acts occur in the privacy of one's home, White held. "Plainly enough, otherwise illegal conduct is not always immunized whenever it occurs in the home," he wrote, adding, "it would be difficult...to limit the claimed right to homosexual conduct while leaving exposed to prosecution adultery, incest and other sexual crimes even though they are committed in the home. We are unwilling to start down that road."

In a dissenting opinion nearly twice the length of the majority opinion, Justice Harry A. Blackmun said the Hardwick case "is about 'the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized men,' namely, 'the right to be let alone.'"

A prime weakness of the majority ruling, Blackmun argued, was "the court's almost obsessive focus on homosexual activity," in spite of the fact the challenged Georgia law applies equally to heterosexuals—including married couples.

Blackmun—writing also for Justices William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall and John Paul Stevens—disagreed further with the majority's finding that such acts are not protected by their commission inside one's own home. "Indeed, the right of an individual to conduct intimate relationships in the intimacy of his or her own home seems to me to be the heart of the Constitution's protection of privacy," he argued.

The case came to the high court from Atlanta, where Hardwick challenged the Georgia statute in a federal district court. But Judge Robert H. Hall dismissed the complaint. The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed Hall, however, and the state appealed to the Supreme Court.

Hardwick was arrested in August 1982 and charged with committing sodomy with another man in his Atlanta house. Although the district attorney decided not to prosecute, Hardwick challenged the law anyway.

The practical effect of the high court ruling is expected to be minimal because most states that still have sodomy laws make no attempt to enforce them. In Georgia, for example, no sodomy prosecutions have been undertaken for several decades.

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New Orleans Seminary Announces
Administrative Staff Additions

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NEW ORLEANS (BP)—New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has added two persons to its administrative staff.

Ferrell Foster has been named director of public relations, and Craig Gilliam has been chosen assistant to the vice president for development. Both are graduates of New Orleans Seminary.

Foster, 30, a native of Dallas, served as acting director from January until May, when he received the master of divinity degree. Before coming to New Orleans as a student in 1984, Foster was managing editor of the Marshall (Texas) News Messenger.

Gilliam, 27, a native of Shreveport, La., was pastor of First Baptist Church of Onida, S.D., before joining the seminary staff.

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