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July 24, 1987

87-112

Employers Required
To Complete Forms

By Eric Fox

WASHINGTON (BP)--All employers, including churches and other religious organizations, now are required to verify their employees are legally authorized to work in the United States.

This requirement, part of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, took effect June 1, 1987. Under the new law, all employers, regardless of the number of people they employ, are required to fill out a form that confirms their employees are either American citizens or aliens who are eligible to work in the United States.

The government requires Form I-9 to be filled out for each new employee hired on or after June 1, 1987, and for every employee hired between Nov. 7, 1986, and May 31, 1987, who still is employed. Those employees must complete the top half of Form I-9 on or before the day they start work. Employees who were hired between Nov. 7, 1986, and May 31, 1987, and who still are employed have until Sept. 1, 1987, to fill out the form.

During the first three days of employment, employees must provide their employer with original documents -- such as an original driver's license, Social Security card or birth certificate -- to establish their identity and eligibility to work. The employer then must complete the bottom half of Form I-9 by certifying that the original documents have been inspected. Employees who are unable to obtain these documents within the three-day period may have up to 21 days to produce the required documents if they show proof they have applied for the documents.

The forms must be retained by the employer for at least three years. They are not filed with the government but must be presented to an Immigration and Naturalization Service or Department of Labor representative upon request. This registration process must be completed for all new employees, including American citizens.

These new requirements do not apply to people hired before Nov. 7, 1986; people hired after Nov. 6, 1986, who left employment before June 1, 1987; or people who are self-employed.

Due to public unawareness of the law, the INS will work with employers and only issue citations for the first violation before May 31, 1988. But each violation following the initial citation and each violation after the 1988 date will result in monetary penalties.

The INS has undertaken a national campaign, including advertising spots and regional meetings, to inform employers about the law. The agency, in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service, also distributed 6.6 million brochures to employers nationwide.

Further information and Form I-9s can be obtained by contacting the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 425 I St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20536.

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Day Care Firings Put
Church In Spotlight

By Greg Warner

Baptist Press
7/24/87

LUTZ, Fla. (BP)--A church's decision to require all its day-care workers to be Southern Baptists has brought nationwide publicity to Lutz, a quiet suburb north of Tampa, Fla.

Art Ballard, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lutz, fired the day-care director, a Methodist, and informed other day-care workers they would have to become Southern Baptists or lose their jobs.

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Seven of the 25 workers quit rather than change denominations.

Ballard's action immediately caught the attention of news media as far away as New York and Idaho because of the U.S. Supreme Court decision June 24 that allows churches and religious organizations to discriminate against members of other churches and faiths in hiring practices.

Ballard said the court decision was welcome support but was not a part of the policy decision. The church's new employee policy was adopted by the personnel committee in February, he said.

"It was about a week before the Supreme Court decision that we decided to go with it," he added.

Ballard said he sought advice from Baptist officials and three attorneys to make sure the policy was legal. No one has disputed the church's right to hire only Southern Baptists, he said.

But two former workers said they quit not because of the policy, but because of Ballard's handling of it. Though neither is Southern Baptist, both workers could have stayed under certain conditions because of their length of employment.

"I just quit because of the way it was handled," said Betty Newberger, who had taught at the center for 16 years. "If he didn't want me I didn't want him."

Pastor Ballard defended the policy and its implementation as a "fair, just and merciful" way for the church to keep faith with its convictions and correct "some inequities."

Since First Baptist considers the day-care center a ministry, he said, "we have a responsibility to treat it as any other ministry of the church."

Ballard said when he became pastor of the 780-member church in January he discovered some of the teachers in the church-owned day-care center were not Christians and others were not active in any church.

The new policy requires all ministerial staff members, including the child-care director, to be members of First Baptist Church. All non-ministerial staff members, including day-care workers, must belong to a Southern Baptist church, but members of First Baptist are given preference for those positions.

Ballard met with workers and parents from the day-care center July 2 to inform them of the new policy, but he did not discuss how it would be implemented.

All seven employees quit before the implementation was explained in a second meeting a week later, Newberger said.

In the second meeting, Ballard said workers who had been employed less than five years would have to resign or join the church by July 31. Those employed for five to 10 years had until Dec. 31 to make the same decision. Workers who had been at the center 10 to 15 years had until June 1, 1988, while those employed more than 15 years would be replaced by attrition.

Newberger, whose family joined a United Brethren church in Lutz many years ago when it was the only church in town, said she was offered a job at First Baptist's day-care center 16 years ago because the director "couldn't get anybody from the church" to work there.

She said she was told July 7 that she could continue teaching her class of 4-year-olds if she attended her church twice a week, gave First Baptist a record of her tithe, and gave a written and oral testimony of her faith.

"That wouldn't have been any problem, but I just don't want to work under those circumstances," she said. The restrictions "were certainly intended to discourage me from staying."

Edna Shipp, 70, a Roman Catholic cook who worked at the center for 17 years, said she could have continued working but "I would have felt like a traitor."

"After all my friends had been told to leave, I could never stay," she said.

Shipp said Ballard never told her she could have continued working under the attrition policy. "He could have told me. ... I didn't feel he wanted me to stay," she said.

"I loved it down there," she added. "It was my life. I don't care what religion it was. It was a nice place to work."

Shipp said she will not seek another job. Instead she is caring in her home for four children who were withdrawn from the center by their parents after the new policy was announced.

Ballard said 14 children have been taken out of the center, which now cares for 80 children. He added, however, that three of the workers have become Christians as a result of the policy change.

"I prayed and fasted over this decision for a number of days so that I could implement the policy with the least hurt for anyone involved and still have an effective implementation," Ballard said.

The pastor said most church members have supported the changes, as evidenced by a prayer meeting July 15.

"I told the church we had sinned against those people in day care and those parents for allowing lost people ... and people who weren't going to church to teach," Ballard said. "We all agreed and got on our knees and repented of that sin."

Prior to becoming pastor of the Lutz church, Ballard was pastor of Old Forest Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., where he received media attention for attempting to begin a non-geographical association of "conservative" Baptist churches. He also drew attention by hosting several theological/political meetings concerning the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Veteran RTVC
Staffers Resign

Baptist Press
7/24/87

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Two veteran staff members of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and the ACTS network have resigned to join the world's largest direct broadcast satellite network.

Jim Rupe and John Cobb Smith have been employed as executives of the Automotive Satellite Television Network. The network offers daily news and training for the automotive industry to 2,000 subscribers nationwide.

Rupe, a 24-year employee of the RTVC, is executive producer of the network. Smith, who was on the commission staff for more than 31 years, is director of operations for ASTN.

Rupe, an executive producer for the RTVC, developed the "Country Crossroads" radio and television shows. Smith, director of TV operations, was in a number of roles at the commission. For the past five years he has coordinated the image magnification, sound and lighting for the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Southern Baptists Minister
To Bus Accident Victims

By Jerilynn Armstrong and Ken Camp

Baptist Press
7/24/87

DALLAS (BP)--Nine youth were killed and one left missing when the rain-swollen Guadalupe River overturned a van and bus from Seagoville Road Baptist Church in Balch Springs, Texas, on July 17.

Forty-three people from the independent Baptist church in southern Dallas County were leaving Pot O' Gold Bible Camp, near Comfort, Texas, when flood waters swept away their vehicles.

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From south central Texas to southwestern Arkansas, Southern Baptists reached out to the hurting families of a grieving church.

A Southern Baptist deacon from Texarkana, Ark., involved his church in helping to rush one family to the scene of the tragedy.

John and Rosie Bankston had been vacationing in Hot Springs, Ark., when they learned that their 17-year-old son, John Jr., was involved in the bus accident and still was missing. Speeding down westbound Interstate 30 with emergency lights flashing, the couple was stopped and questioned.

After discovering the reason for their excessive speed, troopers brought the Bankstons to the Department of Safety headquarters where officers made calls to get more information about the accident.

At the headquarters, Cpl. Mike Brown, a deacon at Trinity Baptist Church, Texarkana, Ark., heard the couple's story and volunteered to find a way to fly them to Comfort.

Since no commercial flights were available, Brown and other troopers began to search for a private plane. Brown succeeded in reaching the general manager of an aviation service owned by Trumand Arnold, owner of the Roadrunner chain of convenience stores, who offered to fly the couple to Comfort for the discounted rate of \$900.

The trooper agreed to see that the bill was paid, and the Bankstons flew from Texarkana to central Texas, leaving their pickup truck with Brown.

The next morning, Brown approached his pastor, Wallace Edgar, and told him about the Bankstons.

"Mike came up to me just before the second worship service and asked if he could share something with the church," Edgar said. "He told about the events of the last 12 hours, and the people responded with a love offering of nearly \$500 for the family."

Roadrunner Corporation accepted the \$500 as full payment for services, writing off the rest of the bill.

"We praise the Lord for the spirit of concern that Mike demonstrated," said Edgar. "Though we were not directly involved with the tragedy, we are thankful that our church could minister to one family."

Edgar said members of the congregation drove the Bankstons' truck to Balch Springs. John Bankston Jr. is the one person who remains missing.

Several central Texas Baptist churches opened their homes and hearts to the families of Seagoville Road Baptist Church.

First Baptist Church, Comfort; First Baptist Church, Boerne; and Trinity Baptist Church, Kerrville, all supplied volunteers from their congregations to help make up the search teams which scoured the banks of the Guadalupe River for the bodies.

Members of First Baptist of Comfort made sandwiches for families of the victims, and Pastor James Holt spent an afternoon praying and counseling with the teenagers.

"A large part of the time I would pray individually with the kids, but later in the afternoon we joined hands in a prayer circle asking for strength and peace. It was a moving experience to see the love and support these teenagers had for one another and the witness they gave to people outside their fellowship," Holt said.

First Baptist of Boerne received a call from one of the rescue team coordinators to send blankets and clothing for the teenagers rescued from the flooding river.

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"Our church is known as a caring fellowship and one that can respond quickly," said Mark Boyd, associate minister. "We sent down about 60 blankets and available clothing. Flooding similar to this happened in 1978, so we are aware that it can strike quickly with devastating results."

Bill Blackburn, pastor of Trinity Baptist in Kerrville, heard the reports and immediately began to get ready to respond.

"We were in touch with the Texas Baptist Disaster Relief team, but the decision was made not to send the unit when the water began to recede by mid-morning and there was very little property damage," Blackburn said.

He and his church staff counseled with the families of the two teenagers taken to the Kerrville hospitals and provided counselors for the group in Comfort.

"Trinity is known as a fellowship of people who care, so this was simply an extension of our concern," Blackburn said.

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Texas House Deflects Lottery
Referendum, Approves Tax Increase

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
7/24/87

DALLAS (BP)--In the final hours of the second special legislative session, Texas lawmakers approved a \$5.7 billion tax increase and \$38.3 billion budget but no proposal for a state lottery -- in spite of a last-ditch effort by lottery backers to redirect attention toward the state-run numbers game.

On Saturday before the midnight Tuesday, July 21, deadline, Rep. Ron Wilson of Houston introduced a plan for a non-binding referendum on the state lottery. According to Wilson's plan, the lottery question would have appeared on the Nov. 8, 1988, general election ballot.

The measure tentatively was approved 85-64 on second reading in the House of Representatives, but it was struck down on a point of order on final passage.

Rep. David Hudson of Tyler, a leader in the fight against a state lottery, raised the point that the revised measure could not be considered because it did not raise any revenue and consequently was not within the governor's agenda for the special session. House Speaker Pro Tem Hugo Berlanga of Corpus Christi, who was chairing the session, upheld the point, preventing further consideration of the measure.

"Words cannot express the deep gratitude we feel for the political savvy and courage of David Hudson, Steven Carriker (representative from Roby) and about 70 other 'Untouchables' who refused to be corrupted by the lottery," said Gary McNeil, Austin-based legislative assistant with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"We ... appreciate the stand of Gov. Bill Clements, who was not enticed by the lottery lobby to include the lottery in his call for the special session," McNeil said.

In a private July 7 meeting, Clements had assured a group of Texas religious leaders -- including former Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr. of First Baptist Church of Euless -- that he would not lobby for the lottery.

The compromise budget and tax proposal approved by the legislature was worked out by Clements, Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby and House Speaker Gib Lewis July 15. After it was approved by the legislature, Clements signed the tax bill into law July 21 and was expected to approve the budget with a few line-item vetoes.

"The Texas Legislature has passed a responsible tax bill that takes care of the problems of the state today and -- hopefully -- in the future," said McNeil.

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Southern Baptists Win
Religious Heritage Awards

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Six Southern Baptists are among 13 recipients of national awards presented by Religious Heritage of America for 1987.

The organization, founded in 1951, is an "interfaith association which believes that the application of the Judeo-Christian principles which made America will keep America," said Religious Heritage of America spokesperson Bobbe Martini. Its purpose is "to demonstrate that this religious heritage is vital for America today," she said.

Award recipients are cast as role models for American society and are chosen for attributes such as honesty, ethical and moral conduct, participation in a local worship community, religious activity which is not limited to a single faith group and religious commitment which has had a national impact or which deserves national attention, Martini said.

Churchwoman of the year is Mary Kay Ash, chairman of the board of Mary Kay Cosmetics and a member of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas.

Other Southern Baptist recipients are:

-- Charles Barrett Howard Sr., director of denominational relations for Campbell University, a Southern Baptist school in Buies Creek, N.C., winner of the gold medal.

-- Gus A. Becker, retired president of Gus Becker Printing Co., and a member of Calder Baptist Church in Beaumont, Texas, honored for business and professional leadership.

-- William E. Poe, an attorney and member of First Baptist Church of Charlotte, N.C., also honored for business and professional leadership.

-- Carl Mays, president and director of Creative Living, Inc., and a member of First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg, Tenn., a faith and freedom winner.

-- U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and a member of Columbia Baptist Church of Falls Church, Va., recipient of the RHA special award.

Kenneth H. Cooper, a Dallas physician and member of Prestonwood Baptist Church, is general chairman of the RHA 1987 national awards program.