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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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WASHINGTON -- Abortion issue intensifies as House committee OKs FOCA.
DALLAS -- Unable to change Waldenbooks policy, Annuity Board sells Kmart stock.
NASHVILLE -- Jesse Helms defends Freemasonry against Texas Baptist's claims.
NASHVILLE -- 'True Love Waits' gets Time magazine coverage.
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**Abortion issue intensifies
as House committee OKs FOCA**

By Tom Strode

**Baptist Press
5/20/93**

WASHINGTON (BP)--The House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, rejecting several amendments designed to enable states to continue to regulate abortion, recently approved the Freedom of Choice Act by a 20-15 vote.

The committee's action May 19 means this year's most significant abortion legislation is on the floor of both the Senate and House. The Labor and Human Resources Committee sent FOCA to the full Senate by a 12-5 vote in late March. It is uncertain when a floor vote will be held in either house.

"This is an extreme bill that would require abortion on demand, even during the final months of pregnancy," said Douglas Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee, in a written statement.

"This is a major victory for pro-choice America," said Kate Michelman, president of the National Abortion Rights Action League, in a prepared statement, "a critical step toward restoring the freedom to choose for every American woman -- in whichever state she calls home."

Supporters of FOCA contend it is only the writing into federal law of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion, but opponents of the bill argue it is more far-reaching and would prohibit state limitations on abortion allowed under Roe and ensuing rulings.

Among amendments rejected by the Judiciary Committee which have been allowed by the Supreme Court under Roe were:

- Permitting states to require a short waiting period, rejected on a 17-17 vote.
- Allowing states to prohibit abortion after 24 weeks of pregnancy, rejected 20-15.
- Enabling states to prohibit non-physicians from performing abortions, rejected 18-17.
- Permitting state and local governments to ban abortions in their public hospitals, rejected 18-17.
- Allowing states to require parental consent or notification for minors' abortions, rejected 19-16.
- Enabling states to require informed consent for women considering abortion, rejected 20-15.

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"We have stressed time and time again how radical FOCA is," said James A. Smith, director of government relations of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "The actions of the House Judiciary Committee underscore just how true this statement is."

In all but one case, all 14 Republicans on the panel voted for each of these amendments, while Democrats George Sangmeister of Illinois, Romano Mazzoli of Kentucky and David Mann of Ohio crossed over at least three times each to join them.

On final passage, Sangmeister and Mazzoli were the only Democrats to oppose FOCA, while Jim Ramstad was the only Republican to favor it.

The committee approved by a 31-4 vote an amendment by Rep. Don Edwards, D.-Cal., chief sponsor of FOCA, permitting states to protect religious and other private hospitals from being required to provide abortions. The House version already included a "conscience clause" for individuals. The Senate version provides protection for both individuals and institutions.

The committee also passed a parental involvement amendment offered by Edwards by a 19-14 margin, with two voting present. The amendment allows a "responsible adult" to be involved instead of a parent. Republican critics on the committee charged the language would enable an abortion clinic employee to be the "responsible adult" involved.

"No one should take heart in the so-called parental involvement provision," the CLC's Smith said. "It is a sham and fraud meant to give political cover to members of Congress who wish to deceive their constituents about this bill. The Edwards amendment will not result in true parental involvement and will, in fact, result in nullifying true parental notice and consent laws currently on the books."

The committee approved by voice vote an amendment declaring the purpose of FOCA is to restore the test on state restrictions used in Roe and Supreme Court decisions through 1988. The language is too vague, opponents of FOCA argue, and would not allow for restrictions approved by the court since 1988.

"I cannot stress too much how critical it is that Southern Baptist pastors and others become engaged in this fight," Smith said. "This radical abortion-on-demand bill is now ready for consideration in both houses of Congress. It is urgent that Southern Baptists bombard their representatives and urge them to oppose this bill."

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Unable to change Waldenbooks policy,
Annuity Board sells Kmart stock By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
5/20/93

DALLAS (BP)--After unsuccessful attempts to influence Kmart policy regarding the sale of offensive materials at its Waldenbooks subsidiary, the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention last month sold its stock in the corporation.

Following trustee action on Nov. 3, 1992, the Annuity Board announced in January it had filed a resolution with Kmart Corporation requesting its inclusion in proxy materials and consideration by shareholders at their annual meeting May 25.

The resolution asked Kmart's board of directors to instruct the corporation management to "stop the promotion, display and sale in its Waldenbooks subsidiary of literature and other media that is largely devoted to the description of sexual encounters or that has a graphic depiction of exploitative sex and/or gratuitous violence."

Annuity Board President Paul W. Powell said at the time that he had asked every church pension board in the nation -- and all Baptist foundations and state conventions -- to study and support the resolution.

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But in April, the board learned that its efforts to be included in proxy material and on the stockholders meeting agenda were unsuccessful, according to Thomas E. Miller Jr., Annuity Board senior vice president for public relations.

"The president had said that if we were not successful in the shareholders resolution, then we should divest ourselves of the stock in a prudent and orderly fashion," Miller said.

Miller had reported earlier that on Dec. 10, 1992, the Annuity Board held 221,200 shares of Kmart stock. He did not release the number of shares held at the time the decision was made to divest but confirmed that all stock had been sold. Little additional information was made available.

"It had become obvious to us that we could not respond to every question about individual stocks, so the decision was made to stop doing that," he said.

Kmart has been targeted for boycott by Donald Wildmon's American Family Association since March 1990 because of "pornographic" materials sold at its Waldenbooks subsidiary.

The Annuity Board began addressing Kmart's Waldenbooks policies in the spring of 1992 and had sought through several avenues to use its shareholder status to influence Kmart corporate policy.

Following the Annuity Board's trustee meeting last August, Powell wrote a letter to Joseph E. Antonini, Kmart's chairman and chief executive officer, saying Kmart was "making a conscious decision to pander to baser instincts" through its Waldenbooks policies on the sale of offensive materials.

"Our own independent investigation has caused us to conclude that Waldenbooks does, indeed, offer products we consider grossly offensive to prevailing community standards," Powell wrote. Antonini did not reply directly.

In addition to the Annuity Board shareholders resolution, the United Methodist General Board of Pensions submitted its own resolution asking Kmart directors to provide shareholders a special report on Waldenbooks policies and practices concerning the selection of "adult fiction" and magazines and its policy on the display and sale of such materials. By March, Kmart notified the Methodist board Waldenbooks had withdrawn from sale its "Blue Moon" series of adult books.

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**Jesse Helms defends Freemasonry
against Texas Baptist's claims** **By Art Toalston**

**Baptist Press
5/20/93**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Sen. Jesse Helms has been enlisted in Freemasonry's defense of itself against efforts led by Texas physician James "Larry" Holly to have the Southern Baptist Convention to declare Freemasonry as incompatible with Christian faith.

The North Carolina U.S. senator, identifying himself as a Southern Baptist and as a 33rd-degree Scottish Rite Mason, writes in the May 1993 issue of The Scottish Rite Journal: "... far too much has been made of the wrong-headed, albeit sincere, obsession of a Texas Baptist that prompted him to launch a false and unfair vendetta against Freemasonry."

Helms' article is but one element in the journal's sole focus on the study of Freemasonry as authorized by messengers to the 1992 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis.

The Masonic publication includes an article, "How To Assure Success At The SBC," encouraging Southern Baptist Masons to attend the June 15-17 SBC annual meeting in Houston to support a recommendation already approved by Home Mission Board directors ultimately leaving Masonic membership as a matter of individual conscience and church autonomy.

The article notes, "... the threat of anti-Masonic forces overturning the Home Mission Board's report at the Convention itself is very real."

Also, on the cover of the Scottish Rite publication is a large picture of Harry S. Truman, with the White House in the background, identifying the late U.S. president as a "Southern Baptist and Freemason."

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The journal also devoted its February issue to the SBC Freemasonry study.

The HMB recommendation to the SBC, approved by its directors March 17, states: "In light of the fact that many tenets and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, while others are compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine, we therefore recommend that consistent with our denomination's deep convictions regarding the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church, membership in a Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience."

The HMB recommendation also exhorts Southern Baptists "to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scripture, and the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God."

The SBC is scheduled to vote on the recommendation at 10:25 a.m. Wednesday, June 16.

Both Holly, whose motion to the 1992 SBC originally called for a special commission to study Freemasonry, and John W. Boettjer, managing editor of The Scottish Rite Journal, have endorsed the HMB recommendation, though each has criticized a lengthier document summarizing the HMB interfaith witness department's study of Freemasonry.

Holly told Baptist Press May 20, "The recommendation is weak but acceptable" because it declares that many Freemasonry tenets are incompatible with Christianity.

"I don't intend to make a counter-proposal at present," Holly said. "I don't want to try to turn the convention into a committee of the whole and try to do the research and discussion that should have been done by the Home Mission Board." If given the opportunity to address the convention, however, he said he would.

Helms, in his article targeting Holly, writes, "The Southern Baptist Convention is not led by foolish men and women who would allow themselves to be tugged over the cliff by this unfounded and unfair vendetta. Most of the SBC's leaders are friends of mine. ... My advice to the 1993 SBC Convention, for whatever it is worth, is that the Messengers give Dr. Holly's motion a quick and quiet demise. The Southern Baptist Convention has far more important things to do."

Holly, in a written response to Helms, took issue with the word, "vendetta," stating his stance against Freemasonry "does not stem from a 'bitter hostility'; it stems from a God-given, Bible-based conviction about the nature and origin of the Masonic Lodge." Holly said he regards Freemasonry as "one of the great evils in Southern Baptist life."

Of Helms, Holly wrote: "Senator Helms has stood for conservative causes in the past, but in his membership in the Masonic Lodge and in his support of Freemasonry, he places himself in alliance with those who wish to destroy the Christian roots of this country, with those who oppose the Bible being read in the public schools, and with those who hate everything that Jesus Christ stands for. One wonders if Senator Helms could continue to be elected if he opposed the Masonic Lodge which controls so much of the political system in this country."

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'True Love Waits' gets
Time magazine coverage

Baptist Press
5/20/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's "True Love Waits" campaign which advocates abstinence before marriage has received mention in Time magazine.

The cover story of Time's May 24 issue conveys the mixed messages American teen-agers are getting about sexual values. In the third paragraph of the story titled, "How Should We Teach Our Children About Sex?", the article reports on the 50 teens who shared a commitment to sexual abstinence during the BSSB's Youth Ministry National Conference 4 in Nashville in April.

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The True Love Waits covenant being signed by Southern Baptist teens is spelled out in the article: "Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, those I date, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually pure until the day I enter a covenant marriage relationship."

Richard Ross, youth ministry consultant in the board's church growth-Sunday school division and one of the architects of the campaign, said Time reporter Lisa H. Towie conducted three hours of interviews with Ross and two of the 50 teens from his church who made the commitment.

Ross said Towie, who wrote excerpts of the story, expressed interest in follow-up stories as the True Love Waits campaign unfolds. Several hundred teens will help present the campaign during the Sunday School Board report Tuesday, June 15, at 7:50 p.m. at the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston.

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BSSB introduces Hispanic
customer service line

Baptist Press
5/20/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Effective immediately, the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board is introducing a special 1-800 customer service telephone number for customers wishing to place orders in Spanish.

Mercy Rodriguez, bilingual service representative, will answer calls directed to 1-800-257-7744. Backup representatives will be Rosa Saenz and Ida Rutschow, employees in the ethnic and black church coordination office.

"While we have had a bilingual representative available at our general customer service number, this is the first time we have had a number dedicated to Hispanics. Now they will be able to call this number knowing someone will answer in their own language," said Nancy Norman, manager of the church customer service section.

Norman said Hispanic customers may use the new number to order books, Bibles and any product or dated literature the board publishes or sells.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by SSB bureau of Baptist Press.

Alaska school officials censure
teacher who defends FMB trustee By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
5/20/93

FAIRBANKS, Alaska (BP)--Preparing for a highly publicized school board hearing June 2, school officials have filed a complaint with Alaska's teacher-licensing agency against a teacher who used a public letter to defend her besieged colleague Rodney Duncan.

The May 17 complaint to Alaska's Professional Teaching Practices Commission alleges teacher Debra Vanasse broke the commission's Code of Ethics by elevating her right to free speech over her duty to protect a student accusing Duncan. The commission has the power to decertify the teacher if it chooses.

School officials also are asking that 100 other letters of support for Duncan be ruled inadmissible as testimony in the upcoming hearing.

School district attorney Joan Rohlf said a campaign of letter writing to school board members is turning a personnel matter into a popularity contest. But Duncan said the letters are not the result of a campaign. "I haven't made a single call to ask anyone to do anything for me," he said.

Duncan is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and son of Alaska Baptists' executive director, Bill Duncan. He taught language arts at North Pole High School outside of Fairbanks for 17 years until April, when he was fired with pay, pending a hearing by the school board. He also works with youth and music at Cross Roads Baptist Church in North Pole.

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School Superintendent Richard Cross said he's baffled at how so many people can be so certain Duncan has done nothing wrong. "This issue has become bigger than life, and I don't know why yet," he told Baptist Press in a telephone interview. Supporters of Duncan -- students and adults -- have picketed school district offices and staged sit-ins at the high school.

Police and school officials have investigated, but no criminal charges have been filed against Duncan. The school district will not say what accusations it has against him. But one school official told Baptist Press that he reported a parent's allegation against Duncan to child abuse authorities. He said the investigation of Duncan turned up issues related to "professional standards in teacher-student relationships."

Duncan denies wrongdoing and has asked the hearing be public. "I have nothing to hide," he said. The original allegation came from a "problem student" who used him as an alibi, he said. "Professional issues" which most concern the district involve his living out a Christian witness as a church youth director and public school teacher, he said.

Rumors of sexual misconduct started circulating in the absence of details as investigations fraught with leading questions and leaks of false information got under way, Duncan said.

Vanasse, who teaches French and English at North Pole High School, wrote a letter to the local paper, the News-Miner, in response to a letter published earlier. The first letter, written by Deirdre Shipman of North Pole, accused Duncan of hiding the district's charges against him.

Shipman, foster mother of the student in question, said Duncan made "lewd sexual advances or suggestions toward many young men/students" She said some students hang their head low when they see "We Support Mr. Duncan" signs -- part of public demonstrations by students -- because they have been left confused and hurt by Duncan's behavior.

Vanasse wrote in her reply: "Knowing the full content of his (Duncan's) termination notice, I stand behind him completely. I am aware enough to realize that a teen-ager may be confused and hurt before he ever makes an accusation against a teacher, and that a student's head may be held low amidst public support for that teacher because the student knows he has lied."

Because of the letter, "We reprimanded the teacher," Superintendent Cross said. "Do you have the right to call a student a liar ... before that student has ever said (publicly) what he believed to be true? I say surely you don't." Repeated attempts by Baptist Press to reach Vanasse for further comment on Cross' response were unsuccessful.

As the story has unfolded during the past two months, Duncan, Vanasse and others have said they interpret a teacher's role in the lives of students differently than the district does in Duncan's termination notice.

For years, they said, Duncan has opened his home to students and organized educational trips abroad for them. He has made himself available as a listener and a friend, according to students, former students and parents.

Those who support Duncan say it is unfair for school board members to be forced to disregard purely spontaneous letters from the public in the decision-making process -- because they are publicly appointed representatives.

"The letters ... are the essence of who I am," said Duncan. "A lot of things they (school officials) accuse me of are true -- but not in a perverse sort of way. They (former students who have written letters) think the charges are ridiculous, because they think that's what a teacher does."

Nonetheless, Rohlf, the school attorney, has written Gary Stapp, the assistant borough attorney, asking him to require school board members to strike from their minds any support letters they have received and to discard others they could receive before the hearing. Rohlf claims only sworn testimony during the hearing should be allowed as testimony.

School officials have announced Duncan will not speak at his school's graduation ceremonies despite two elections by the senior class and a visit by class officers and a parent to the school superintendent.

"The school district attorney said I'm out drumming up support," Duncan said. "But what he (Cross) doesn't realize is that everybody writing to him are people I know. He thinks they're writing just because they're Baptists."

In one letter, Linda Fansler, a nurse with the Alaska Psychiatric Institute and a member of Cross Roads Baptist Church, urged school officials not only to reinstate Duncan as a teacher "but to offer a public apology and to make it known that he is a role model"

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Bible distribution may be allowed
despite decision, Whitehead says By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
5/20/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--While the Supreme Court recently allowed a lower-court ruling prohibiting the distribution of Bibles in an elementary school, the decision may not signal a ban on all such activity, a Southern Baptist church-state specialist said.

The court announced May 17 it would not accept an Indiana case in which the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Gideons International representatives could no longer give copies of the Bible to fifth-grade students.

"A denial of appeal by the Supreme Court does not amount to a decision affirming the lower court," said Michael Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"Thus, the Supreme Court has not banned all Bible distributions in public schools. It has decided not to hear the appeal of this case.

"The Seventh Circuit has banned Bible distribution where the Gideons were invited into elementary classrooms," Whitehead said. "Perhaps distribution in high schools or in hallways or with parental consent would still be permissible."

Americans United for Separation of Church and State, meanwhile, praised the court for protecting the "religious neutrality of our public schools."

"Public schools must serve students of all faiths and none," said AU Executive Director Barry Lynn in a written statement. "They should not be turned into a bazaar where rival religious groups compete for converts. Parents, not school officials, should decide what devotional materials children read."

The court of appeals' unanimous January ruling overturned a district judge's decision permitting the Bible distribution. The Gideons' activities at the elementary school violated the 1992 Lee v. Weisman decision prohibiting school promotion of religion, including prayers at secondary school graduations, and the 1971 Lemon v. Kurtzman opinion preventing government endorsement of and entanglement with religion, the court of appeals said.

In appealing to the Supreme Court, the school district argued speakers from other groups, such as the Boy Scouts of America and 4-H, and distribution of other literature had been allowed in classrooms.

Local Gideons apparently had been allowed to distribute literature in the Rensselaer, Ind., schools since the 1950s.

The case was Rensselaer Central v. Berger.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Elder mails 6,300 copies of proposed SBC reforms," dated 5/19/93, please make two changes:

-- In the 16th paragraph, 20 percent should be corrected to 2 percent.

-- In the 21st paragraph, please substitute the following for the initial words: Provide for each state to select its eligible first, ...

Thanks,
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