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ATLANTA -- Clinton health plan may hike SBC costs without any extras.
WASHINGTON -- House OK's military policy, pleases supporters of ban.
ATLANTA -- Billy Graham to hold Atlanta crusade in '94; photo.
ATLANTA -- Graham tells Atlanta he likes the Braves.

Clinton health plan may hike
SBC costs without any extras

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
9/30/93

ATLANTA (BP)--President Clinton's health care reform plan could cost Southern Baptist agencies more while providing similar or less coverage, say employee benefits specialists at the convention's three largest agencies.

While tempering their remarks with a wait-and-see attitude, representatives of the Home and Foreign Mission boards as well as the Sunday School Board expressed concerns the agencies and their employees may not be better off with the president's plan.

"I think it's a lose-lose situation," said Butch Savage, manager of the Sunday School Board's compensation and benefits section.

Savage said his preliminary studies show Clinton's plan to fund the program with a 7.9 percent payroll tax would cost the board more than it currently pays for health insurance. Meanwhile, employees with better coverage than the government plan might have to pay taxes on their extra coverage, he said.

"There's a real, distinct potential for increased cost for both the board and its employees," Savage said. "I don't see what they can do in an across-the-board package that's going to be any better than what we've got."

The Home Mission Board, which is currently self-insured, would "roughly break even" with a 7.9 percent payroll tax, said Daniel Garcia, director of the board's human resources division.

Garcia said one of his main concerns is the government's ability to control its administrative costs.

"Currently, the board spends about \$7.5 million a year for the benefits program, and that has been increasing over the past years rather steadily," Garcia said. "One of the selling points of this plan is employers will get some control of their costs."

But Paul Wong, manager of salary and benefits for the Foreign Mission Board's Richmond office, questions whether the government can fund all it intends to offer with the proposed payroll tax.

"We are not very optimistic it can stay at 7.9 percent," Wong said.

"There have been numerous studies to analyze his (Clinton's) plan, and they pretty much conclude that the cost will be higher for the employer than the 7.9 percent payroll tax."

While there may be few new benefits, parts of the plan are quite similar to employees' current cost and coverage, said Garcia and Savage.

The regional insurance "alliances" in the plan offer similar choices to those already available at the Home Mission Board and Sunday School Board, they said.

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"I don't think it's going to be an extraordinary change. The difference might be: What's it going to do in the future?" Garcia said. "But I think on the outset it's close."

All three added the proposals could undergo major changes in Congress before they become law. "What comes out on the other end in a year or so is anybody's guess," Garcia said.

But agencies already have drawn some conclusions based on the current proposals. Among them:

-- Most home missionaries receive health insurance from the Home Mission Board although they are officially employees of the state convention where they work. Clinton's plan would require the state convention, as employer, to be the insurance supplier, Garcia said.

"I would anticipate that we would look at a way to at least continue to support those missionaries, whether they're in our plan or in another plan," he said.

But covering home missionaries could result in higher insurance costs for state conventions, Garcia said.

-- The cost of insuring temporary employees could raise rates at the Sunday School Board, Savage said.

"The board uses a lot of temporary employees," he said. "If we end up having to provide benefits to those folks, then it's going to be a significantly larger cost for us."

A "worst-case scenario," Savage said, requires coverage for temporary employees averaging as little as 17 hours per week. "That could cause our premiums to be significantly higher."

-- Employees who currently withhold money before taxes to pay for medical services will wind up paying more if that option is eliminated, Wong said. "In (Clinton's) plan, he is proposing to wipe that out by '94."

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House OK's military policy,
pleases supporters of ban

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
9/30/93

WASHINGTON (BP)--The House of Representatives, rejecting attempts both to dilute and toughen a legislative response to President Bill Clinton's policy on homosexuals in the military, recently passed an amendment which pleased supporters of the long-standing ban much more than its opponents.

Though the amendment in some ways codifies the military ban on homosexuals, Clinton is expected to sign the defense reauthorization bill in which it is included. The Senate already has passed the amendment.

The congressional language incorporates two significant changes from the ban in force until late January, when the president announced a six-month timetable for lifting the military restriction on homosexuals. It removes the declaration that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service" and it fails to require new recruits to be asked whether they are homosexual.

The newly adopted amendment, however, is more restrictive than the compromise policy announced by Clinton July 19 after months of controversy. The Senate/House language, unlike the president's proposal, permits commanders to initiate investigations at their discretion, writes into law the long-standing criteria for discharge of homosexuals and requires military inductees to be briefed on rules pertaining to sexual conduct.

Ban opponent Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D.-N.Y., admitted in House floor debate the new amendment "does not simply codify the president's policy."

James A. Smith, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said, "Congress took a harmful policy concocted by the president and restored sanity to the question of homosexuals in the military."

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"Military experts have told me that the policy adopted by Congress may actually be better than the one Clinton sought to change. On virtually every issue of significance, those who oppose homosexuals in the military won.

"This is a major defeat for the homosexual lobby. They badly miscalculated when they decided to make this policy change their No. 1 priority in the 103rd Congress," Smith said. "I believe that this failure has further set back any chance they had in this Congress on a federal civil rights bill for homosexuals."

The amendment passed Sept. 28 on a 301-134 vote.

Rep. Martin Meehan, D.-Mass., introduced an amendment which would have allowed the president, rather than Congress, to determine the policy on homosexuals in the military. It failed, 264-169. The approved language says Congress has the authority to pass laws on the military and to set criteria for service.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, R.-Calif., introduced an amendment which would have reinstated the entry-level question about the inductee's sexuality. The House rejected it on a 291-144 vote.

The approved language, written by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn, D.-Ga., says evidence of a person's "propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts" is a basis for prohibiting a person from serving in the military. This is consistent with the long-standing policy and not Clinton's announced policy.

It also allows the Secretary of Defense to reinstate the question on sexuality to inductees if he determines it necessary.

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton had promised homosexuals he would lift the ban. When he announced such intentions in late January, the president was met with widespread opposition from the public, military and Congress. He eventually backed away from his plans.

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Billy Graham to hold
Atlanta crusade in '94

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
9/30/93

ATLANTA (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham will hold his first Southeastern crusade in seven years next October when he speaks five days in Atlanta's Georgia Dome, he announced Sept. 29.

Atlanta crusade leadership will include former President Jimmy Carter who will serve as the honorary chair and former United Nations ambassador and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young who will chair the advisory committee.

Southern Baptist leaders in Atlanta joined others in welcoming one of their own, pledging assistance to make it one of the best crusades ever.

Graham, 74, asked for prayer for the crusade, Oct. 26-30, 1994, adding that his greatest burden in any city is the need for revival and renewal within churches.

"If the people in the churches are living as Christians are supposed to live and taking a stand on the things they should be taking a stand on as a group, we could see a change in our country," said Graham, addressing hundreds of religious leaders in Atlanta.

"The greater our material growth, the more profound our spiritual needs," said Young, who currently is serving as co-chair of the 1996 Olympic Games. "As we face the challenge of the Olympics and the 21st century, the power of Billy Graham's message is a prophetic challenge to our future."

Although diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease last summer, Graham said the illness is kept in check with medication. He received thunderous applause as he held both hands rock steady to indicate no trembling in his muscles.

"It hasn't slowed me down at all," he said, although he later admitted he plans fewer longer crusades. Advanced technology allows him to transmit sermons to multiple venues, cutting the need for the hectic travel schedule he previously kept, he added.

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Graham said he'll come to Atlanta preaching the same message he's taken around the world during a ministry that has spanned more than 50 years.

"We don't have any new gospel, any strange things to bring to you. It's the old gospel, and it's just as relevant today as it was 500 years ago or a thousand years ago," he said. "It has power. It's backed by prayer and by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit."

Graham, who has preached more than 400 crusades, said the secret to a successful event "is prayer and more prayer."

"The crusades that we go to, whether here or abroad, when they put the emphasis on prayer we see a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit," he said.

Christian leaders from Atlanta, home of the 1994 Super Bowl and 1996 Olympics, welcomed news of the crusade.

"We really need an event like this," said Russ Barker, director of missions for the Atlanta Baptist Association. He said the crusade could be a tool to bring together the ethnically and doctrinally different Christians of Atlanta. "We really need this kind of event to focus on what Christianity really's all about."

Cameron Alexander, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church, said Atlanta is in need of spiritual revival. "Atlanta needs something. It needs more than the Olympics; more than the Super Bowl," he said. "Atlanta needs Jesus."

The South's heritage as the "Bible Belt" offers the potential for success, said Richard Harris, director of mass evangelism for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, based in Atlanta.

"The opportunity is great here. Atlanta's a city that's ripe for evangelism," he said. "We'll do anything we can through prayer, publicity, participation and promotion to make this one of the most successful crusades that Dr. Graham's ever had."

Southern Baptist involvement will likely include promotional help as well as volunteers during the crusade, Barker said. Many crusade counselors will come from Baptist churches, and local work committees will have significant Baptist representation, he predicted.

"It can be the opportunity for evangelicals to learn to cooperate in a common ministry as kind of a practice run for the Olympics," he added.

Graham said he has no plans to stop preaching, adding jokingly, "They may have to bring me out in a wheelchair."

"I'm getting older. So many people ask me, hopefully, 'When are you going to retire?' And they ask as though they'd be glad to have a date and have it soon," he said. "I told them I didn't see anywhere in the Bible where anybody retired, so I didn't intend to retire until the Lord retired me."

The evangelist's final crusade in 1993 concluded in mid-September in Columbus, Ohio. In addition to the Atlanta meetings, Graham's confirmed 1994 schedule includes crusades in Tokyo, Jan. 13-16; Cleveland, June 8-12; and the North American Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Louisville, Ky., June 8-July 1.

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(BP) photo (vertical) of Dr. Graham mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Graham tells Atlanta
he likes the Braves

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--Billy Graham let his colors show concerning his favorite baseball team during a recent assembly to announce his Atlanta crusade in October 1994.

"I'm a fan of the Braves," said Graham, a native of the Southeast, where the Atlanta's baseball team stood alone for 25 years before the formation of a team in Miami this spring.

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Graham spoke to the Atlanta audience when five games remained in the regular season and Atlanta was tied with San Francisco Giants for first place in the National League's western division.

Graham told fellow Braves enthusiasts to not lose heart.

The Giants "have their slumps too," he said. "I'm not praying that they'll have any stumbles or slumps or sickness or anything like that, but if one of them does have to go to the hospital, God bless him."

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