

Highest Court Protects Faith-Based Initiative

The Supreme Court ruled Monday that an atheist foundation did not have a legal standing to challenge the use of taxpayer money to advertise and promote faith-based initiatives.



In what Christian observers are calling a victory for free speech, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that the atheist Freedom from Religion Foundation did not have a legal standing to challenge the use of taxpayer money to advertise and promote President George W. Bush's endorsement of faith-based initiatives. Monday's decision solidified Bush's faith-based initiatives, which helps religious organizations get federal funds for community projects. "This ruling is a win for the thousands of community and faith-based nonprofits all across the country that have partnered with government at all levels to serve their neighbors," Bush said in a written statement. "Most importantly, it is a win for the many whose lives have been lifted by the caring touch and compassionate hearts of these organizations." Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, said the decision sends "a powerful message that atheists and others antagonistic to religion do not get an automatic free pass to bring Establishment Clause lawsuits." The ruling may be a sign that the high court will be "less concerned about keeping church and state separate, so later decisions will be more sympathetic to government's cooperating with religious institutions," Tom Goldstein, a Harvard Law School lecturer on Supreme Court litigation, told the *Boston Globe*. The decision was one of three rulings conservative Christian lobbyists applauded yesterday. The court also ruled that the *Wisconsin Right to Life* should not have been barred from running pre-election advertising ads that mention a federal candidate and

that school officials can restrict drug-related speech at school functions, but did not extend that authority to other types of controversial speech, including religious expression.

Bush Vetoes Stem Cell Bill for the Second Time

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President George W. Bush vetoed, for the second time in one year, a bill that would have allowed human embryos to be destroyed for research purposes. In a press conference held Wednesday, Bush said embryonic stem cell research crossed both moral and ethical lines. "If this legislation became law, it would compel American taxpayers—for the first time in our history—to support the deliberate destruction of human embryos," Bush said. He encouraged support for more "ethically responsible" scientific research. Earlier this month, the House of Representatives passed the bill in a 247-176 vote, saying the legislation would "save lives, find cures and give hope to those suffering." Bush maintains that there are many other options to save lives that do not include utilizing an embryonic cell. "Destroying human life in the hopes of saving human life is not ethical—and it is not the only option before us," Bush said during a press conference in the East Room of the White House. "We're already seeing remarkable advances in the science and therapeutic uses of stem cells drawn from adults and children, and the blood from umbilical cords—with no harm to the donor." The House currently does not have enough votes to override Bush's veto. Many Christian conservatives applaud the president's decision. "President

Bush has proven once again that he's not just a man who talks about preserving a 'culture of life' as political rhetoric—he's a man who deeply cherishes the sanctity of all human life," said James Dobson, Focus on the Family chairman. "His veto today of a bill that would have led to dissection of young innocents in the name of suspect science solidifies his already-strong record as one of our nation's most pro-life presidents."

Christian Embassy Helps Sudanese Refugees

The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem aided 37 Sudanese refugees who entered Israel by way of Egypt on June 14.



The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) raised \$30,000 in a 24-hour period to aid 37 Sudanese refugees who entered Israel by way of Egypt on June 14. The 10 families, eight of whom are Christians, fled from the genocide and ethnic cleansing campaign of the Khartoum government in Sudan. "These are people who have struggled to get out of the most horrific conditions, and we felt compelled to share the burden with the state of Israel to help them," ICEJ Executive Director Malcolm Hedding told the *Jerusalem Post*. Currently ICEJ is providing room, board and medical treatment for refugees for three weeks in Israel, a country that legally defines the refugees as "enemy nationals." The Sudanese families are now working with ICEJ and various human rights organizations to find homes for their families among the Israeli kibbutzim and moshavim groups. "We escaped from Sudan to Egypt seven years ago. But the Egyptian government threatened to throw us into jail because we are refugees,"

said a 30-year-old refugee who fled the Sudan with his pregnant wife and 2-year-old daughter. "We had no choice but to escape once again, to the only democracy in the Middle East, where we knew our human rights will be honored. We cannot go back to Sudan, that would be a certain death sentence for all of us." The *Post* reported that roughly 450 people are currently seeking asylum in Israel.

Youth Ministries Join to Pray and Fast for Purity

More than 25 national Christian youth organizations are joining forces to call young people to fast and pray for sexual purity.



More than 25 national Christian youth organizations are kicking off the formation of a joint ministry network by calling young people to fast and pray for sexual purity. With participation from ministries such as TheCall, Exodus International and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, the network launched the "Pray for Purity" campaign June 1. Organizers are asking youth and youth leaders to pray and fast every first Friday of the month. "As we minister to students, we see day after day the incredible difficulties that they face," said Scott Davis, director of student ministries of Exodus International, an ex-gay ministry based in Florida. "They are constantly bombarded with sexual content that confuses their self-identity and twists their views of sexuality. As a result, they are increasingly engaging in sex outside of the protection of marriage and suffering dire results. Because of the dangers today's youth are facing, we are joining together to pray on the first Friday of every month for our nation's youth." The prayer network stems from a

counter-culture teen movement pioneered by Teen Mania Ministries, which was created to inspire teens to “reject destructive pop culture messages and recreate teen culture on their own terms.” This country desperately needs young men and women of character to make a difference among their peers,” Davis said. “This can only happen when our youth encounter and experience the life-giving power of Jesus Christ. We are pleased to partner with such dynamic organizations who are eager to accomplish this goal.”

Ruth Graham Dies at 87

Ruth Graham, the wife of Billy Graham, died Thursday evening. Billy Graham and their five children were by her side.



Ruth Graham, the wife of world-renowned evangelist Billy Graham, died Thursday evening. Ruth Graham, who celebrated her 87th birthday on Sunday, battled degenerative osteoarthritis of the back and neck for many years and recently was treated for pneumonia, the Associated Press reported. Billy Graham and their five children were by her side. “I am so grateful to the Lord that He gave me Ruth, and especially for these last few years we've had in the mountains together,” Billy Graham said in a written statement. “We've rekindled the romance of our youth, and my love for her continued to grow deeper every day. I will miss her terribly, and look forward even more to the day I can join her in Heaven.” In a written statement released Wednesday Billy Graham said that both he and Ruth Graham had made the decision to be buried beside one another at the Billy Graham Library in his hometown of Charlotte, N.C. A public memorial service will be held at the Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina on Saturday at 2 p.m.

Mission: Mobility

On June 16 Don Schoendorfer will end a two-month bicycle trek across the U.S. designed to raise money to distribute wheelchairs for free in developing nations.



On June 16 Don Schoendorfer, a California-based engineer, will end a two-month bicycle trek across the U.S. designed to raise money to distribute wheelchairs for free in developing nations. Beginning his ride in New York in April, Schoendorfer, founder of Free Wheelchair Mission, hoped to raise \$670,000 to distribute 15,000 wheelchairs through partnerships with Christian and humanitarian groups. To date the organization has raised \$379,398 , but with roughly 130 million people worldwide in need of wheelchairs, Schoendorfer said every donated wheelchair has the potential to change a life. “A common explanation for why you can’t walk in developing nations is because God hates you. It’s your caste, your card, your karma,” says Schoendorfer, who attends Mariners Church in Irvine, Calif. “So there’s a real spiritual disability there too.” He says the idea to build low-cost wheelchairs came 30 years ago when, during a visit to Morocco, Schoendorfer saw a woman crawling across the road because she couldn’t walk. The image haunted him and eventually inspired him to found Free Wheelchair Mission (www.freewheelchairmission.org), which has distributed more than 210,000 wheelchairs at a cost of \$44.40 each. Unlike other global needs, Schoendorfer says mobility is a problem Christians can easily help solve. “It’s a real neat thing for me to see that with \$44.40, you can help change someone’s life.” –**Adrienne S. Gaines**

Egypt Releases Jailed Christian Convert

A Christian convert from Islam was recently released from prison just a few hours after prison officials told him he would serve another 10 years.



A Christian convert from Islam was released recently from an Egyptian prison after serving two years without charges under Egypt's emergency laws, Compass Direct reported. On April 28, Wadi el-Natroun Prison officials gave Bahaa el-Akkad an Egyptian bill worth nearly \$9 for a taxi fare and told him he was free to leave. The official reason for the release is unknown, but it comes as a surprise to many. Just hours before he was released, officers from the State Security Investigation told el-Akkad that he would remain in prison for another 10 years if he did not return to Islam. El-Akkad's lawyer said the prisoner defended his faith. "God has brought me to this place, and He alone will let me go to my home. You cannot do anything against God," el-Akkad said. By nightfall he was reunited with his wife and three children. El-Akkad, who is now 58, was arrested in 2005 after Egypt's secret police learned he had converted to Christianity. "While I was in prison, my family told me thousands of people were praying for me," el-Akkad reportedly told his lawyer after his release. "I was sure that was true because Jesus was with me all through my ordeal." Although el-Akkad is free from prison, he is not free from danger, Compass reported. Despite the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarakis' encouragement of Muslims to be more tolerant, a radical Muslim group, Muslim Brotherhood, has reportedly threatened to kill el-Akkad for his disloyalty to Islam if he was released from prison.

Billy Graham Memorial Library Opening Drew Hundreds

Former Presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter spoke at the dedication ceremony.



On May 31, roughly 1,500 invited guests participated in the private dedication of the Billy Graham Library located in Charlotte, N.C. "It's my prayer that this center will be a testimony to the world of the amazing love of God and the great things He can do through lives that are surrendered to Him," said Graham's son Franklin, who is president of the Billy Graham Evangelical Association (BGEA) and the project director. The edifice is located on land that was originally the Graham family home and the current BGEA headquarters. The \$25 million, 40,000-square-foot library is built in the form of a dairy barn and silo to be reminiscent of the Charlotte dairy farm where Graham spent his early youth. The facility houses six exhibits, four galleries and two theaters covering Graham's lifetime work of preaching to more than 250 million people on six continents through his evangelistic crusades. Former President George H.W. Bush delivered the keynote address and former Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter participated in the dedication ceremony. "I'm supportive of the plans for the evangelistic library in Charlotte, which I believe will honor the Lord and demonstrate His faithfulness in changing lives through evangelism," Billy Graham said in a statement. "It will continue to serve as an ongoing crusade, inspiring believers and challenging visitors with the gospel for many years to come." Admission to the memorial library will be free. The facility, which is expected to attract 200,000 to 400,000 visitors annually, is scheduled to open to the public on June 5. **—Sandra K. Chambers**

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