

Liberty Watch

Conservative Groups Oppose Arlen Specter

Despite attempts by conservatives to block the appointment of Sen. Arlen Specter as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Republican from Pennsylvania was unanimously nominated to the judiciary panel Nov. 18, the New York Times reported. Pro-life and pro-family groups had opposed Specter because of his support for abortion. Though further confirmation is still required, Specter is likely to assume the role when Congress reconvenes this month. Specter said he would not use a "litmus test" to block judges who oppose abortion from being confirmed to the Supreme Court and promised to give the president's nominees quick consideration. Still, pro-family leaders were wary of Specter's confirmation and said they would be watching him closely.

John Ashcroft Resigns

Attorney General John Ashcroft resigned Nov. 10, saying the "objective of securing the safety of Americans from crime and terror has been achieved," the Associated Press (AP) reported. A longtime member of the Assemblies of God, Ashcroft said he believed his "energies and talents should be directed toward other, more challenging horizons," the AP said. Focus on the Family founder James Dobson and Prison Fellowship founder Chuck Colson welcomed President Bush's nomination of Alberto Gonzales as Ashcroft's replacement.

Jerry Falwell Launches New Organization

To maintain the momentum gained by social conservatives Nov. 2, the Rev. Jerry Falwell has launched a 21st century version of the Moral Majority, which he is calling the Faith and Values Coalition. Falwell said the group, based in Lynchburg, Va., will focus on seeing pro-life, "strict constructionist" judges—or those who interpret the Constitution based on what they believe was the authors' original intent—confirmed to the Supreme Court and lower courts; passage of a federal amendment banning gay marriages; and the election of another "socially, fiscally and politically conservative president in 2008." The 71-year-old will lead the organization with his son, Jonathan, and Liberty Counsel founder Mathew Staver.