

Liberty Watch

Ministers Unveil Black Contract With America

The newly formed High Impact African-American Leadership Coalition unveiled its Black Contract With America on Moral Values during a Feb. 1 press conference. Released in concert with the group's first summit, held at Crenshaw Christian Center in Los Angeles, the contract is aimed at lobbying for better access to health care, revision in the education and criminal justice systems, more funding to fight AIDS and the genocide in Sudan, and a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. The group, led by Bishop Harry R. Jackson Jr. and formed in partnership with the Traditional Values Coalition, later set a goal of getting 1 million signatures in support of the document.

Virginia Officials Allow Bible Classes to Continue

In a 5-1 decision, the Staunton, Va., school board ruled Feb. 14 that Bible classes can continue to be taught in area public elementary schools, the Associated Press (AP) reported. First-, second- and third-grade students will continue to be bused to nearby churches for the weekly Bible lessons, which have been offered in the small rural community since 1929, the AP said. Officials said they would conduct a one-year review of the classes to determine if there is validity to some parents' concerns that the 30-minute lessons are divisive and unnecessary since students also take character-education courses. The Supreme Court ruled in the 1950s that the classes do not violate the separation of church and state because they are held away from school property, the AP said.

Ohio Governor Proclaims Feb. 14 'Day of Purity'

Ohio Gov. Bob Taft declared Feb. 14 a Day of Purity to encourage youth to support abstinence. The move was motivated in part by the efforts of a 14-year-old girl in Ohio who had launched an abstinence-education campaign in her school. Florida-based Liberty Counsel launched the Day of Purity last year. Since then, hundreds of schools, churches and Christian organizations have participated, with elementary- to college-age students wearing special white T-shirts symbolizing purity and encouraging their classmates to remain virgins until marriage.