

Move to shift missions money to political action fails_62705

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Move to shift missions money to political action fails

By Marv Knox

Editor

NASHVILLE, Tenn.-The Southern Baptist Convention turned back an attempt to redirect money from missions to political action during its annual meeting in Nashville.

Instead, SBC messengers approved the 2005-06 Cooperative Program budget of \$189.9 million-as originally proposed by the convention's Executive Committee.

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That budget allocates 50 percent of undesignated convention receipts (\$94.9 million) to the International Mission Board and almost 22.8 percent (\$43.3 million) to the North American Mission Board. It also directs 1.49 percent (\$2.8 million) to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

But Rodney Albert, pastor of Hallsville Baptist Church in Hallsville, Mo., called on Southern Baptists to channel more resources into America's culture wars. He proposed amending the budget so that the International Mission Board's share would decrease to 49.75 percent of receipts, the North American Mission Board's portion would drop to 22.54 percent, and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's allocation would climb to 1.99 percent.

"We are in a substantial cultural war," Albert said. "We are fighting for the soul of America. But the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission gets one of the smallest amounts of budget."

Southern Baptists are "fighting for the sanctity of life, ... for the sanctity of marriage," he said, citing their efforts in debates on everything from genetic use of stem cells to homosexual marriage.

"A budget reflects our moral values," Albert said. And while both mission boards' budgets are supplemented by special offerings, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission depends primarily on the Cooperative Program budget and doesn't have enough money to accomplish all it needs to do," he added.

"The battle (for American culture) is not coming. It is here," he said.

But that battle will be won or lost in missions, countered Jim Wideman, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England and a messenger from Rice Memorial Baptist Church in Northborough, Mass.

"Our purpose is not to save the culture of America; our purpose is to save

the world,” Wideman said. “If our culture goes down, it won't be because we didn't spend more money for lobbying. If our culture is saved, it will be because we spend more money for evangelism.”

SBC messengers struck down Albert's amendment and approved the overall budget. In addition to the mission board and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the Cooperative Program budget directs \$41 million to the SBC's six seminaries and historical library and archives, \$1.4 million to Guidestone Financial Resources, formerly known as the Annuity Board, and \$7.7 million to the SBC operating budget, which primarily funds the Executive Committee.

Among other business proposed by the Executive Committee, messengers voted to approve:

Changing the name of the Annuity Board to Guidestone Financial Resources. This was the second required vote to amend SBC Bylaw 14, making the name change official.

- ◆ An amendment to SBC policies that enables a prospective messenger to present a “fax, e-mail, or other physical or electronically transmitted document” in substitution for an official SBC registration document.
- ◆ Two future convention sites—Indianapolis, Ind., in 2008 and Louisville, Ky., in 2009.
- ◆ The 2009-10 SBC calendar, which includes 32 items. This recommendation also deleted Baptist World Alliance Day from the SBC calendars in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Last year, the SBC withdrew from the BWA, comprised of 211 Baptist conventions worldwide.