

# **Congress, the Culture, and Christian Voting**

## **(1992-2006)**

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- I. On many current cultural and pro-family issues, polling numbers show that public support is high, but voting numbers show that the support in Congress is much lower. For example:
  - A. Prohibiting federal courts from removing “Under God” in the Pledge
    1. Public support: 90%, thereby giving it public bi-partisan support (approximately 40% of the nation identifies as Republican, 40% as Democrat, and 20% as third-party or independent)
    2. The vote on HR 2389 (Pledge Protection Act of 2006): only 60% of House Members voted for it
    3. 96% of Republicans voted for it; 19% of Democrats
    4. Passed House; not taken up by Senate
  - B. Permitting public displays of the Ten Commandments
    1. Public support: 76%, thereby giving it public bi-partisan support
    2. The vote on HR 1501 (Ten Commandments Defense Act): only 57% of House Members voted for it
    3. 93% of Republicans voted for it; 27% of Democrats
    4. Passed House; not taken up by Senate
  - C. Authorizing faith-based programs
    1. Currently, in government-run prisons (state or federal), the average recidivism rate is 68% (meaning that 68% of inmates, within two years of their release from prison, will commit a crime that will place them back in prison); however, in faith-based prisons (currently operating in about a dozen states), the recidivism rate is only 8% (a rate that is 88% lower than government-run prisons). Consider the effect of this not only in reduced spending and crime but also in strengthening the family, since between one and two million children presently have at least one parent in prison
    2. Currently, in government-run drug rehab programs (state or federal), the average cure rate is under 10%; however, in faith-based drug rehab programs, the cure rate is over 70%
    3. Public support for faith-based programs: 75%, thereby giving it public bi-partisan support
    4. The vote on HR 7 (Community Solutions Act): only 54% of House Members voted for it
    5. 98% of Republicans voted for it; 7% of Democrats
    6. Passed House; not taken up by Senate
  - D. Permitting voluntary school prayer
    1. Public support: 82%, thereby giving it public bi-partisan support

2. The vote on HJ Res 78 (Community Life Amendment; requires a 67% margin for passage): only 52% of House Members voted for it
  3. 87% of Republicans voted for it; 13% of Democrats
- E. Defining marriage as being one man and one woman
1. Public support: 72%, thereby giving it public bi-partisan support
  2. In the Senate: the vote on SJ Res 1 (The Federal Marriage Amendment; requires a 67% margin for passage): only 49% of Senators voted for it
  3. 85% of Republican Senators voted for it; 5% of Democratic Senators
  4. In the House, the vote on HJ Res 88 (The Federal Marriage Amendment; requires a 67% margin for passage): only 55% of House Members voted for it
  5. 87% of Republicans voted for it; 16% of Democrats
- F. Repealing the anti-family Death Tax (see Proverbs 13:22, Ezekiel 46:18, Proverbs 19:14, I Chronicles 28:8, Ezra 9:12, etc.)
1. Public support: 80%, thereby giving it public bi-partisan support
  2. The vote on HR 8 (Death Tax Repeal Act), only 57% of Senators voted for it
  3. 96% of Republicans voted for it; 9% of Democrats
  4. Passed House; failed in Senate by one vote in Senate
- G. Repealing the Marriage Penalty Tax
1. Public support: 89%, thereby giving it public bi-partisan support
  2. The vote on HR 4810 (Marriage Tax Penalty Relief Act), only 48% of Senators voted for it
  3. 87% of Republicans voted for it; 0% of Democrats
  4. Passed House; failed in Senate
- H. Controlling the Supreme Court
1. The Supreme Court (and the federal courts in general) are the primary source of the culture war. That is, no legislature has passed a law permitting abortion-on-demand but it is the national policy via a Supreme Court decision; similarly, no legislature has prohibited voluntary school prayer but such is the national policy via Supreme Court decisions; and the same is true on issue after issue.
  2. Supreme Court Justices have described the Court as “a super board of education for every school district in the nation,” “a national theology board,” and amateur psychologists on a “psycho-journey.” Far too many of our current policies on criminal justice, education, morality, etc., are not the result of legislative action but rather of judicial decrees.
  3. 77% of the nation thinks that federal judges have gone too far, and 59% believe that they have singled out Christianity for attack, there giving public bi-partisan support to efforts to restrain judicial activism
  4. Nomination of strict-constructionists John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court as an effort to restrain judicial activism

5. Public support: six in ten Americans, thereby giving public bi-partisan support
  6. Vote in the Senate on the Roberts confirmation: 100% of Republicans; 50% of Democrats
  7. Vote in the Senate on the Alito confirmation: 98% of Republicans; 9% of Democrats
- II. Why is Congress so far out of step with the people on so many cultural issues, having a support level that is 20 to 30% lower than the public?
- A. President James A. Garfield (the 20<sup>th</sup> President, and a minister of the Gospel during the Second Great Awakening) answered this question in 1876:

“Now, more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave, and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature. . . . [I]f the next centennial does not find us a great nation . . . it will be because those who represent the enterprise, the culture, and the morality of the nation do not aid in controlling the political forces.”

The Church probably better represents the “enterprise, the culture, and the morality of the nation” than any other group, but it has not “aided in controlling the political forces”

### III. Christian voting

- A. There are three types of Christian voters in polling
1. Christian voters – largest group; this is the group that simply self-identifies as (i.e., calls themselves) Christians
  2. Born-again voters – a Christian voter who says he has had a life-changing experience with Jesus Christ; a smaller group than that of Christian voters
  3. Evangelical voters – a born-again voter who also believes the Bible is important and who attends church, prays, and reads the Bible at least once a week; this is the group of Christians that take their faith most seriously
- B. Recent Christian voting patterns
1. 1992-1996: a 17% decrease in Christians who voted
  2. 1996-2000: an additional 23% decrease in Christians who voted
  3. 1992-2000: a 40% decrease in Christians who voted
    - a. There are 60 million evangelicals in America
    - b. Only 15 million evangelicals voted in 2000
    - c. Some 24 million (40%) evangelicals not even registered to vote
- C. 2002 efforts
1. In the 2002 election, following the dramatic drop from 1992-2000, national evangelical leaders widely urged voter registration, voter turnout, and Christians voting their values (earlier national statistics had indicated that up to 45% of evangelicals ranked economic issues more important than moral issues when voting)
  2. The national efforts resulted in 2% increase in Christian voter turnout

3. Even that percentage resulted in dramatic improvements, which were visible in exit polling on the abortion issue
  - a. 41% of all voters said the abortion issue impacted their vote
  - b. 23% said they voted a straight pro-life ticket
  - c. 16% said they voted a straight pro-abortion ticket
  - d. This resulted in a 7% advantage for a pro-life candidate (it had been some years since most federal candidates had an advantage by being openly pro-life)
  - e. The results were visible in those elected to Congress
    - i. Of the 54 Freshmen elected to the U. S. House, 36 were pro-life – a 67% pro-life class (anything over 50.1% is moving forward)
    - ii. Of 10 Freshmen elected to the U. S. Senate, 8 were pro-life – an 80% pro-life class (the Senate is where the help is most needed)
8. Legislative impact
  - a. Based on the logic of President Garfield (as well as that of Proverbs 29:2), if pro-life voters elect pro-life legislators, the logical result would be that they would begin to get pro-life legislation
  - b. Since the *Roe v. Wade* Court decision in 1973, Congress had not reduced the scope of abortions or the type of abortions performed but instead restricted only money
    - i. Each session, Congress defeats the Sanchez Amendment that would fund abortions on military bases
    - ii. Each session, Congress enacts the Hyde Amendment that prohibits federal funds from being used for abortions
    - iii. Each session, Congress upholds the Mexico City policy that prohibits foreign aid monies from going to groups that perform abortions overseas
  - c. The 2002 Congress became the first to pass not just one but three bills that protected unborn human life; all three were signed by President Bush
    - i. Infant Born-Alive Protection Act
    - ii. Unborn Victims of Violence Act
    - iii. Partial-Birth Abortion Ban

#### D. 2004 efforts

1. National evangelical leaders continued to widely urge voter registration, voter turnout, and Christians voting their values
2. Those efforts resulted in an 93% increase in Christian voter turnout (28.9 million evangelicals voted, up 93% from the 15 million that voted in 2000; of course, 28.9 million of the 60 million still means that under half of evangelicals are voting, but this still is a dramatic increase over 2000)
3. The effect was reflected in exit polling on the abortion issue
  - a. 42% of all voters said the abortion issue impacted their vote

- b. 25% said they voted a straight pro-life ticket
- c. 13% said they voted a straight pro-abortion ticket
- d. This resulted in a 12% advantage for pro-life candidates
- e. The results were visible in those elected to Congress
  - i. Of 40 Freshmen elected to the U. S. House, 25 were pro-life (a 63% pro-life class)
  - ii. Of 9 Freshmen elected to the U. S. Senate, 7 were pro-life (a 77% pro-life class)

E. Overall effects of the past two elections

- 1. Not only have a number of pro-life, pro-faith, and pro-family legislators been elected to Congress but the change has been especially visible in the Senate
- 2. Over the last two elections, of the 19 Freshman Senators elected, 15 have been pro-life – a 79% pro-life class
- 3. It has been the addition of these new pro-life Senators that has allowed the confirmation of two new pro-life Justices to the U. S. Supreme Court – something that likely would not have happened had not Christians showed up in the past two election cycles and voted their values
- 4. Those two new Justices have already had a significant impact on a number of Biblical and pro-family issues, including a pro-life Court ruling that ended a 1981 policy wrongly used to prosecute pro-life protestors
- 5. Only one more such Justice is needed to place five solid votes on the Court, thus potentially ending the federal control of the culture war and returning it back to the people, where they can direct it through their elected officials

F. 2006 efforts

- 1. There was a 30% decrease in Christian voter turnout, falling from 28.9 million evangelicals down to 20.5 million)
- 2. The effect was visible in those elected to Congress
  - i. Of 54 Freshmen elected to the U. S. House, on 17 were pro-life (a 31% pro-life class)
  - ii. Of 10 Freshmen elected to the U. S. Senate, only 2 were pro-life (a 20% pro-life class), and one of those two will not vote for marriage as being only between a man and a woman

G. There is a direct relationship between Christian voting turnout and the percentage of elected leaders who reflect basic Christian values

IV. Challenges for involvement

A. The Rev. Matthias Burnet (1803)

Finally, ye . . . whose high prerogative it is to . . . invest with office an authority or to withhold them and in whose power it is to save or destroy your country, consider well the important trust . . . which God . . . [has] put into your hands. To God and posterity you

are accountable for them. . . . Let not your children have reason to curse you for giving up those rights and prostrating those institutions which your fathers delivered to you.

B. The Rev. Charles Finney (1830s)

The Church must take right ground in regard to politics. . . . [T]he time has come that Christians must vote for honest men and take consistent ground in politics. . . . Christians have been exceedingly guilty in this matter. But the time has come when they must act differently. . . . God cannot sustain this free and blessed country which we love and pray for unless the Church will take right ground. . . . It seems sometimes as if the foundations of the nation are becoming rotten, and Christians seem to act as if they think God does not see what they do in politics. But I tell you He does see it, and He will bless or curse this nation according to the course [Christians] take [in politics].

C. The Rev. Frederick Douglass (1852)

I have one great political idea. . . . That idea is an old one. It is widely and generally assented to; nevertheless, it is very generally trampled upon and disregarded. The best expression of it, I have found in the Bible. It is in substance, “Righteousness exalteth a nation; sin is a reproach to any people” [Proverbs 14:34]. This constitutes my politics – the negative and positive of my politics, and the whole of my politics. . . . I feel it my duty to do all in my power to infuse this idea into the public mind, that it may speedily be recognized and practiced upon by our people.

D. The Rev. Francis Grimke (1909)

The Stars and Stripes – the old flag – will float . . . over all these States. . . . If the time ever comes when we shall go to pieces, it will . . . be . . . from inward corruption – from the disregard of right principles . . . from losing sight of the fact that “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people” [Proverbs 14:34]. . . . [T]he secession of the Southern States in 1860 was a small matter with the secession of the Union itself from the great principles enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, in the Golden Rule, in the Ten Commandments, in the Sermon on the Mount. Unless we hold, and hold firmly to these great fundamental principles of righteousness, . . . our Union . . . will be “only a covenant with death and an agreement with hell.” If it continues to exist, it will be a curse and not a blessing.

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Many of the above statistics (and their documentation) as well as the historical quotations can be found in several articles on the WallBuilders website ([www.wallbuilders.com](http://www.wallbuilders.com)) as well as in WallBuilders resources available from the store on our website.

**Articles with the above information and documentation include:**

The WallBuilder Report, Winter 2003, “The November Elections” (at <http://wallbuilders.com/resources/search/detail.php?ResourceID=86>)

The WallBuilder Report, Winter 2004, “A Cultural Update” (at <http://wallbuilders.com/resources/search/detail.php?ResourceID=106>)

The WallBuilder Report, Winter 2005, “Inside Election 2004: A Moral Mandate?” (at <http://wallbuilders.com/resources/search/detail.php?ResourceID=114>)

The WallBuilder Report, Spring 2006, “Good New from the Front Lines of the Culture War”  
(at <http://wallbuilders.com/resources/search/detail.php?ResourceID=139>)

**WallBuilders resources with the historical information and quotations include:**

*Original Intent: The Court, The Constitution, and Religion*

*The Role of Pastors and Christians in Civil Government*

*Voting Inserts for Church Bulletins*

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