

# SOUTHEAST LAW INSTITUTE™

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Dear SLI Supporter:

We are pleased to have received recognition in a national publication. *Human Events* is the leading conservative newspaper in America. On the reverse side of this month's educational memo is a copy of an article about SLI. Your continuing support makes our success possible.

Meanwhile, America continues waging our war against terrorism, but we are getting somewhat back to normal. We are seeing changes in our lifestyles. Some doors and stairways in public buildings that once remained open are locked now. Cars and briefcases are searched at office buildings. Mail clerks handle mail wearing masks and rubber gloves. But, in the midst of all this, the ACLU is threatening to file suit unless a public school in California takes down a banner that says "God Bless America". Yes, things are beginning to get pretty much back to normal.

One beneficial side to all this is that recent events are giving Americans a real opportunity to reassess what religious freedom really means. The issues are certainly clarified in a way we have not seen in a long time and this month's educational memo gives some insight.

We are extremely proud to report Alabama has authorized a new "CHOOSE LIFE" car license vanity plate. SLI was pleased to play a small part, along with the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition Education Fund, Inc., the Christian Coalition, and Prattville Attorney Bob Burton to help bring that about. One thousand of the plates must be reserved before the state will actually produce them and the "CHOOSE LIFE" message becomes a reality on Alabama bumpers. We will let you know the details about how to reserve a plate in upcoming newsletters. Right now, the Christian Coalition is taking names for those who want tags, and you can contact them at [www.ccbama.org](http://www.ccbama.org).

We hope to sell thousands of the plates because it will not only be a good traveling billboard for the pro-life message, it will also raise significant funds for non-profit organizations who deal with crisis pregnancies and adoptions. Eighty-two and a half percent (82 ½ %) of every dollar spent on the plates will go to those organizations. The Alabama Pro-Life Coalition Education Fund, Inc. will assure proper distribution and disbursement.

On the case involving regulation of church daycare centers, we still have not heard anything from the court. In the meantime, an amendment to the daycare criminal background check law failed in the legislature even though we added language which would have continue to provide necessary religious exemptions for church run daycares.

We will keep you informed of developments as they arise on the number of other cases and issues that are in progress. As we draw close to the end of the year, please keep in mind that the summer was lean and we must depend on your contributions in order to finish the year in the black. We need your continued support and as always we want to thank you for your prayers and financial support. With personal regards, I am,

Yours Very Truly,

A. Eric Johnston

AEJ/dcw

*The Southeast Law Institute™ is a 501(c)(3) organization providing legal counsel on constitutional and public policy issues.*

**AN EDUCATIONAL UPDATE FROM  
THE SOUTHEAST LAW INSTITUTE™, INC.**

**To: SLI Supporters**  
**From: A. Eric Johnston**  
**Date: November, 2001**  
**Re: United We Stand and God Bless America**

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The war on terrorism has resulted in increased patriotism. The slogans "United We Stand" and "God Bless America" are virtually omnipresent. We agree with the slogans, but what does each mean?

These slogans have everything to do with who we are as Americans and who we are as religious persons. The reoccurring assurance we now see in public life is that we have faith in one greater than us. We recognize our finite abilities and we recognize just how important our way of life is to us and to the future of the world. It is the role of religion in America that draws these slogans together.

Imagine two spheres of influence that have an overlap. The government is one sphere and the church is the other. The Christian religion is the overlap between the two. Does this make America a Christian nation? U. S. Supreme Court Justice David J. Brewer explained how America is a Christian nation:

"But in what sense can it be called a Christian nation? Not in the sense that Christianity is the established religion or that the people are in any manner compelled to support it. . . . Neither is it Christian in the sense that all its citizens are in fact or name, Christians. . . nor is it Christian in the sense that a profession of Christianity is a condition of holding office or otherwise engaging in public service. . . . Nevertheless, we constantly speak of this republic as a Christian nation. . . ."

America is a Christian nation, not in law, but in principle. This recognizes religious freedom. Perhaps, as most Christians believe, though there are variations of doctrine, faith is a gift accepted by a person; that is, religion is voluntary, not required. With this understanding, our founders came in search of religious freedom. They were mostly Englishmen who had been required to worship according to government dictates. In America there was no such requirement and in 1791 the new republic adopted the free exercise of religion and no establishment of religion clauses of the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. As a result, many sects, and over the next 200 years many religions, all came to America to worship as their conscious' dictated, rather than as government dictated, all free to co-exist.

This plurality does not diminish America's freedom established under the principles of Christian doctrine. In recent national events, we have turned to God as the Christian God in public expressions, *i.e.*, the President's remarks, the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance service, and other activities. This is also seen in our historic national songs and our motto. These do not diminish religious freedom or coerce religious belief. Others are free to turn to their own faith.

In this context, such public religious expression is not contrary to our heritage or belief in God. To deny our Christian heritage denies who we are as a nation. It is increasingly difficult in these days of secularization for Americans to remember who we are. Peace and prosperity have made us forget. September 11, 2001 was a reminder and has returned us to our heritage. We do not use this to go to another place for help, only to our foundation in religious freedom. No one should be forced to accept any doctrine by government, though our government may and should acknowledge God.

This is where the church's influence comes in. The church must use this time to witness the truth and reality of Jesus Christ. People need comfort. They cannot find it in false religion. Christians know the real love of Christ and it must be clearly expressed to non-believers. Only the church can do

this. Only the church has the opportunity and ability. We cannot expect or require the government to do it, either in principle or by law.

However, only government can preserve this right by upholding laws that permit free religious expression. On the other hand, it is not the role of government to witness and indoctrinate. The legal conflict we continuously face in the courts is due to the misunderstanding of secular groups who try to remove the government's role and its recognition of our heritage. They wish to secularize society. But, if they do this, freedom is lost and we have no religion. *Cf.* Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia & Communist China.

These questions are of particular concern now because of the prominence of religion as an issue in this war. Government must recognize the validity of Islam as a religion. That is our law. The church must recognize the error of Islam for salvation. That is its mission. We pray for victory in war to continue our freedom in the temporal world. We pray for the victory of Christianity for men to continue their freedom in the world to come. The role of government is to preserve the free exercise of religion so "United We Stand". The role of the church is the spread of the gospel so "God Bless America".