

Six resolutions approved by messengers

By Joe Westbury
Managing Editor

MACON — Georgia Baptist messengers approved six resolutions ranging from religious liberty to gambling to Common Core education standards. Others addressed topics such as social media and cyber-bullying, traditional marriage, personhood and the sanctity of human life, and an appreciation to the host church.

Protecting religious liberty

This resolution cited the Houston, TX mayor's office recent move to subpoena sermons that challenged the city's Equal Rights Ordinance, "a legal measure that allows transgender people to use public restrooms of the gender in which they identify themselves." While public pressure convinced the mayor to withdraw the subpoenas, her initial decision, the resolution stated, "reflects a growing attempt to silence America's pulpits and classify sermons addressing certain Biblical subjects as hate speech."

The document also lauded the Religious Freedom and Restoration Act (RFRA), which Congress passed in 1993, and its role in ensuring the Affordable Care Act "could not coerce business owners, holding sincerely held religious beliefs, to violate their consciences and force them to include abortion-inducing drugs in their insurance coverage for employees."

The resolution was presented by Brad Hughes, messenger from First Baptist Church of Blakeley.

Gambling

This resolution drew attention to the Georgia Horse Racing Coalition's aggressive "lobbying for pari-mutuel wagering in Georgia, claiming that it will provide tax revenue and employment opportunities."

The document decried "the aggressive actions by the gambling interests in recent months make abundantly clear their intention of seeking to expand legalized gambling in Georgia, including pari-mutuel gambling or wagering on horse racing."

The Coalition has argued that pari-mutuel wagering is legal in 43 states, including the neighboring state of Florida.

The resolution was presented by Brad Waters, messenger from First Baptist Church of Hazlehurst.

Traditional marriage

Messengers reaffirmed their stance on the biblical definition of marriage as being an "exclusive life-long union of one man and one woman."



Claude King began the worship portion of the GBC opening session by asking messengers to **gather in small groups and pray** for spiritual awakening. JOE WESTBURY/Index

The resolution chided the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision "to speak clearly on the issue of same-sex marriage, and has elsewhere supported a state's right to define marriage for itself." It also cited the fact that "the citizens of Georgia spoke clearly in 2004 when 76 percent of the people voted for an amendment to the Georgia Constitution that makes it unconstitutional for the state to recognize or perform same sex marriages or civil unions."

The resolution was presented by Gerald Harris, messenger from Ephesus Baptist Church of Villa Rica.

Social media and cyber-bullying

Citing figures from the National Center for Education Statistics that 1 of 3 students report being bullied during school, with over 16% of all students having considered suicide, 13% plan to commit suicide, and 8% making a serious attempt to commit suicide, and cyber-bullying has been named by leading analysis as a major factor in considering teen suicide, the third leading cause of death among 15-24-year-olds," the convention passed a resolution on Social Media and Cyber-Bullying.

The document referenced the July 29, 2014 death of Braxton Caner, oldest son of Ergun and Jill Caner, "who tragically died by a self-inflicted wound at the age of 15, a teen who may have only a few weeks earlier been victimized by cyber-stalking, cyber-bullying, cyber-harassment, or the like."

Caner was the son of Brewton-Parker College President Ergun Caner of Mount Vernon.

The resolution was presented by Allen Rea, messenger from Dunn Memorial Baptist Church in Baxley.

Common Core education standards

This resolution focused on education as being the primary responsibility of parents, according to Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and that such education standards "are best determined with the active input of local citizens, parents, teachers, and taxpayers in a transparent process."

It took exception to Common Core for being "developed by unaccountable non-profit groups during a closed-door process" that resulted in "a set of copyrighted national academic standards promoted as a method for conforming American students to uniform ("one size fits all") achievement goal, allegedly to make them more competitive in a global marketplace."

The document stated that Georgia Baptists "opposed any standards that weaken parental influence, undermine conservative values, disregard our Christian heritage, or penalize students who refuse to endorse a secular, naturalistic worldview."

The resolution was presented by Tanya Ditty, messenger from Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta.

Personhood and the sanctity of human life

In this resolution, messengers focused on the Bible's affirmation of "the personhood, sanctity, dignity, and value of every human being from the moment of our individual creation, as evidenced by the fact that we are created in the image of God and are known by God while being

formed in the womb."

Messengers, through approval of the document, expressed their support "for a personhood amendment to the Georgia Constitution which would specify that the protections guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution apply to pre-born children."

The resolution was presented by Mike Stone, messenger from Emmanuel Baptist Church of Blackshear.

Appreciation

In a final resolution, messengers expressed their appreciation to Ingleside Baptist Church and the Mid-State Baptist Association for their hospitality in hosting the annual meeting. President Don Hattaway was also thanked, as was the officers and their wives, GBC Executive Director J. Robert White, and the Committee on Order of Business.

The resolution was presented by the 2014 Committee on Resolutions.

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