

Under the gun

Church officials carrying weapons are asking for trouble that will lead to death

Bibles belong in church. Hymnals belong in church. Guns, however, do not belong in church. Earlier this month, Lexington, Ky., passed a law allowing ministers and elders to carry guns inside places of worship.

Pastor Willie Ramsey argued that churches are seen as sources of money. Therefore, carrying a weapon is protecting the church and its money.

Sounds like all these people just fell off the turnip truck. Sooner or later someone is going to get shot, and it probably will be an innocent little altar boy who just happens to be standing in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Ten-year-old Sarah Dobbins of Millington, Tenn., bragged in *Time Magazine* about the .410 shotgun she got for Christmas last year.

This is ridiculous. Gun privileges are being abused. People seem to have forgotten guns kill people. Ten-year-olds are not allowed to play with plastic bags because they might suffocate themselves. But they are getting

guns under the Christmas tree next to their Cabbage Patch kids and Barbie dreamhouses.

Charlton Heston, president of the National Rifle Association, babbled in the same issue of *Time* about the importance of owning guns.

"I find my blood pressure rising when Clinton's cultural shock troops participate in homosexual rights fundraisers, and then claim it's time to place homosexual men in tents with boy scouts and suggest that sperm-donor babies born into lesbian relationships are somehow being served."

Calm down, Moses — no one, including Charlton Heston, can justifiably compare homosexuality and gun control. It is illogical. It is like comparing apples and oranges. Thirty-one states have approved issuing concealed-weapon permits to any citizen without a criminal record. This approval doesn't screen out those who are about to embark on criminal records once the gun is in possession. This approval does not screen out those who do not know how to aim or shoot a gun.

A gun is not a toy, a hobby or a source of entertainment. A gun is a weapon, a deadly one. And the last place one should make an appearance is in the church.

If someone is crazy enough to go into a church for the sole purpose of stealing its money, then maybe that person needs a little

love and acceptance. Maybe that person needs to hear a good sermon and be greeted with welcoming smiles as opposed to being greeted by deacons with pistols.

It is too dangerous to make excuses for something like this. People cannot justify carrying a deadly weapon in order to protect their money while they sing praises to Jesus Christ. Love is the key to opening up a church family to non-members.

Guns will only turn people away from a church, regardless of the denomination. It is scary, and it is unnecessary for leaders of a church to carry guns.

The only time anyone should have a weapon in hand is for self defense purposes. Let's think about this. If someone comes into a church to steal the tithes out of the offering plate, he or she probably intends to do it without anyone's knowledge. It is very likely that an offering-plate thief wouldn't even carry a weapon. It's not like he or she is going to be assaulted by someone in church.

The Kentucky law is completely illogical. It is an excuse for church officials to have a power trip. It is an excuse to abuse authority. It is stupid and irrational. And the consequences have the potential to be deadly.

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APRIL TOWERY
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Homosexuals should be given equal treatment in workforce

Multiple attacks on homosexuals are directly affecting the presence and voice of gays and lesbians in the federal work force.

Presently, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott is blocking the vote on the nomination of openly gay philanthropist James Hormel to be the United States Ambassador to Luxembourg.

Susan Irby, Lott's spokesperson, told the Associated Press that the main stumbling block is the Senate simply does not have time to debate the nomination. Perhaps this is an excuse Lott concocted because of his personal beliefs that condemn homosexual lifestyles.

One should not force his or her religious and moral beliefs on others. On the same token, an individual's sexual orientation does not affect his or her ability to represent the country as a member of the federal work force.

Lott's well-known anti-gay rhetoric and comparison of gays to kleptomaniacs and alcoholics has caused other senators and gay rights' groups to think otherwise about the delay in voting on Hormel's nomination. They see Lott's actions as a conspiracy against federal workers who are homosexuals.

"On a personal level, I am embarrassed that our Republican Party, the party of Lincoln, is the force behind this injustice," Sen. Alfonse D'Amato said. "James Hormel is be-

ing obstructed for one reason and one reason only: the fact he is gay."

Numerous GOP senators urged the vote to go forward; however, no one has confronted Lott. In fact, the Associated Press reported the senate already has the 60 votes required to confirm Hormel's nomination — but only if Lott will allow the vote onto the floor.

Several anti-gay comments have been circulating throughout the news, perhaps offering the flawed reasoning behind the debate.

For example, "My father had a problem with alcoholism," Lott said. "Other people have sex addiction. Other people are kleptomaniacs. I mean, there are all kinds of problems and addictions and difficulties and experiences of this kind that are wrong. But you should try to work with that person to learn to control that problem."

First of all, homosexuality is not a problem. It is not a pestering habit. Also, it is a lifestyle that just happens to be different than the mainstream heterosexual society.

According to USA Today, one Texas politician associates gays with pedophiles, cross dressers and the Klu Klux Klan.

Also, Rep. Sen. Don Nickles said he thinks that a homosexual is not fit to represent our country as an ambassador because it encourages "immoral behavior."

The word immoral has different connotations for every individual. Some may think gays and lesbians are immoral, some may not. Individuals have unique beliefs that are not always consistent with others.

Regardless, it is not the duty of legislators to push their personal beliefs onto others, but rather to act in the interests of the people he or she is representing.

These senseless and ignorant

comments have run rampant throughout the media during June and July.

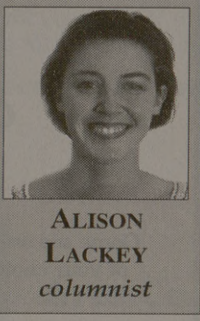
"This is an unprecedented wave of anti-gay attacks," Winnie Stachelberg, political director of the Human Rights Campaign, a gay-rights' lobbying group, said.

In addition, last week, in an effort to begin a paper war, conservative Christian groups launched a media campaign defending Lott and First Amendment rights to speak out against gays.

Full-page ads in national newspapers featured Reggie White as well as Ann Paulk, a 35-year old former lesbian who, as USA Today reports, related how she reverted to heterosexuality because of her Christian beliefs. She ensured the public "people have come out of homosexuality."

To counter the Christian groups, a report from the Human Rights campaign, found on the Lesbian Bisexual Transgender News Wire site, announced plans to take out a full-page ad in USA Today on July 22 featuring a Republican family from Minneapolis with a lesbian daughter. All of these actions stem from the idea of free speech under the First Amendment. Indeed, it is an individual's right to speak out; however, gay-bashing rhetoric is evidence of extreme hatred.

Specifically, religious beliefs and morals are tampering with federal and governmental decisions. This is "a mockery of democracy," HRC communications director and senior strategist David M. Smith said. This is a free country, and federal workers who disagree with lifestyles different from their own should not browbeat.



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Board fails to consider benefits of law school

Heard the joke about the Aggie law school graduate? Unfortunately, the recent decision by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board just took away the punch line.

Last Thursday, the Coordinating Board voted 15-2 to formally reject A&M's request to add a law and legal studies program to its curriculum. The vote was a direct response to the partnership agreement A&M signed with officials from the South Texas College of Law earlier this year. Yet the overwhelming focus on the partnership agreement completely overshadows the real issue: establishing a law and legal studies program at A&M.

Undoubtedly, the financial aspects of creating a law school are daunting. Yet in their decision, the Coordinating Board's main financial concern was that with the A&M-South Texas College partnership, public money would be funneled to a private institution. Clearly, if there was no available funding to begin with, the Coordinating Board would be concerned about where the funding for a law school would end up. Indeed, with state officials wondering what to do with a recent multi-billion dollar surplus, lack of funding does not seem to be an issue.

Even with minimal funding from the state, A&M could certainly finance a sizable portion of the cost associated with establishing a law school. A&M has one of the largest Permanent Endowment Funds nationwide and is renowned for its fundraising ability. A brief tour of campus is proof that alumni can, and will, support projects that benefit the University.

Another concern of the Coordinating Board regarding A&M's request to establish a law and legal studies program was creating another law school when there were already several functioning. In fact, during public hearings on the subject, the biggest opponents of A&M's request were officials from the University of Houston,

whose law school is only a few miles from the campus of the South Texas College of Law and the law program at Texas Southern University.

Establishing a law school in College Station would alleviate part of the geographic problem by being one of the only Texas law schools outside of a major metropolitan area. Even more importantly, establishing a new A&M law school in College Station would create competition between the various law schools in Texas, forcing schools to either improve or lose students to a better academic institution.

Competition among universities is not a new concept. Higher education is just like any other business. Companies, in this case, universities, are established to fulfill the needs and demands of the consumer (students), and if those needs are not being met, students will go to the institution where they will be.

In the past, establishing a professional school in College Station has proven successful. In the early '70s, the Texas Legislature authorized the establishment of a medical school at A&M. Many of the arguments used 20 years ago about establishing another professional school made a repeat performance in Austin last week.

At the time, critics charged the cost was prohibitive and pointed out that there were already seven other medical schools in Texas. Yet the first class graduated in 1981, and since then the A&M Medical School has gone on to gain a nationwide reputation for excellence, culminating in a faculty member's election to the presidency of the American Medical Association.

If the Coordinating Board does not think a partnership between A&M and the private South Texas College of Law is in the best interest of the citizens of Texas, that is its prerogative. However, the Coordinating Board should reconsider its decision and grant A&M a law and legal studies program in College Station.

After all, A&M is the chosen home of a former United States President and several Nobel Prize recipients. Does the Coordinating Board have higher standards?

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