



# Ethical Action Report



*A joint publication of the American Ethical Union and the American Humanist Association*

---

Number 07-03

March 2007

## **In this issue:**

**Global Peace:** Urge Your Congressperson to Support UN Funding

**Reproductive Rights:** Support the REAL Act

**Religious Liberty:** Tell Congress to Uphold Separation of Church and State

**Human Rights:** Demand Protection for Refugee Victims

---

---

The *Ethical Action Report* does not represent the views of the American Ethical Union or the American Humanist Association. The American Ethical Union takes ethical positions on public affairs only through resolutions adopted by its Assembly or Board. Past AEU resolutions are available, searchable by date or topic at: [www.ethicalaction.org/aeuresolutions](http://www.ethicalaction.org/aeuresolutions).

---

---

## **Global Peace:** Urge Your Congressperson to Support UN Funding

In his annual budget request for Fiscal Year 2008, President George W. Bush shortchanged the account that funds United Nations peacekeeping operations by \$500 million. By doing so, Bush has failed to meet both his treaty obligations and his commitment to securing peace around the world.

### BACKGROUND

The U.N. is a vital international institution that not only provides much needed aid to areas of dangerous conditions and conflict but also strengthens relationships between nations, making our world a safer, friendlier place to live. The UN currently has nearly 100,000 troops deployed around the world, with peacekeepers sent to conflict zones such as Lebanon, Haiti, and Sudan – areas that the United States has a moral, as well as personal, stake in.

Particularly since September 11, 2001, the U.S. has had a vested interest in curbing terrorism, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting

democracy around the world. And, as we have painfully learned, we cannot do it alone. Thus the United Nations is more important than ever in securing the safety of our own country.

However, President Bush has often revealed his contempt for this organization, most notably by appointing John Bolton as UN ambassador, a contentious man who was often hostile to UN projects. The latest blow came early in February of this year when the Bush Administration shortchanged the Contributions to International Peacekeeping Account (CIPA), which helps fund UN missions, by \$500 million. Not only does this add to the debt that the U.S. has already incurred at the UN, but it undermines our credibility and sets a bad example by showing the world that we don't live up to our treaty obligations.

#### **ACTION**

Please voice your support for full funding of the United Nations to Congress before they make their final budget decisions. It is important to fulfill our responsibilities and uphold our commitment to global peace.

---

---

### **Reproductive Rights: Support the REAL Act**

The Responsible Education About Life (REAL) Act would require funded programs to provide school children with age-appropriate, comprehensive sexuality education. This important federal program would be a first of its kind and mark a needed move away from the dogmatic and ineffectual abstinence-only sex education programs that have proliferated in our educational systems since President Bush took office in 2001.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Abstinence-only-until-marriage programs focus exclusively on abstaining from sex, often invoking biblical language as validation, and censor information about contraceptives and their proper use. While the aims of these programs to reduce teenage pregnancy and incidence of STDs are honorable, they have proven not to deliver: they don't cut pregnancy rates and may in fact deter sexually active teens from using contraceptives.

Yet, despite these facts, President Bush stubbornly continues to push for increased funding for abstinence-only education. And since 1997 Congress has allocated more than a billion dollars for such programs.

This is an outrage when even one dollar is too much to spend on programs that keep our children unsafe and ignorant. This money is better spent on comprehensive sexuality education that teaches children how to protect themselves. Programs that provide information about both abstinence and contraception have been shown to help delay the start of sexual activity and increase contraceptive use among sexually active youth. Moreover, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine all have advocated for and/or endorsed comprehensive sexuality education, and a majority of the American public support education about contraceptives.

The REAL Act would mark an important step in the right direction on sexuality education. It would require that funded programs provide age-appropriate and medically accurate information. Abstinence would be taught as the only guaranteed way to avoid pregnancy

and STDs, but information about contraceptives would also be required. Funding for REAL would match federal dollars currently earmarked for abstinence-only education.

#### ACTION

Please call your congresspeople and ask them to support the REAL Act, which would help make our kids safer by providing them with responsible sexuality education.

---

---

## **Religious Liberty: Tell Congress to Uphold Separation of Church and State**

The 109<sup>th</sup> Congress was one of the most hostile to separation of church and state in our history. But we have an opportunity to start anew with the newly sworn-in 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

#### BACKGROUND

2006 was a bad year for the Jeffersonian wall in America. Legislation such as the Public Expression of Religion Act, which would have barred awarding legal fees to attorneys who succeeded in proving that the Constitution had been violated in a church-state matter; the Pledge Protection Act, which would have prevented all federal courts from hearing cases pertaining to the interpretation of, or the validity under the Constitution of, the Pledge of Allegiance and the phrase “under God”; the Marriage Protection Act, which, based on arguments that were often of a religious nature, would have written discrimination against gays and lesbians into the Constitution; and a bill nicknamed the "Palm Sunday Compromise," which did an end-run around the courts to prevent the end-of-life decision of Teri Schiavo, all have served to erode the separation of church and state.

But though the outlook was bleak in 2006, 2007 brings a new Congress with ten new members to the Senate and fifty-five new members to the House of Representatives. We have a chance to make this Congress a defender of secular values and religious freedom.

It is vital that you send a message to Congress—particularly if your elected official is new to Congress—that, as a constituent, you demand that church-state separation be upheld. Ask for legislation that provides oversight into the president’s faith-based initiative, that affirms scientific and medical advancement, free from the constraints of religious dogma, and that protects the rights of religious minorities. Ask them to oppose any legislation that attempts to conceal from judicial oversight governmental action that threatens religious liberty, or that awards taxpayer money to programs that mix government with religion.

The framers of the Constitution knew that freedom both of religion and from religion are vital to the health of society. Help us make this congress the most favorable yet to secular values!

#### ACTION

Call your congressperson and remind her or him the importance church-state separation.

---

---

## **Human Rights: Demand Protection for Refugee Victims**

Due to the overzealous “War on Terror” and legislation that has broadened the meaning of the term “terrorist,” tens of thousands of asylum seekers have been denied entry into the United States and thus remain in danger abroad. These people are innocent of any crimes and are often the victims of terrorist acts rather than the perpetrators.

### **BACKGROUND**

The REAL ID ACT of 2005 and the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 have had the unintended consequence of denying a large number of previously eligible refugees asylum in the United States. Moreover, hundreds of legitimate asylum claims and adjustment cases have been placed on hold, putting asylees and refugees in citizenship limbo with the risk of deportation.

The provisions of the REAL ID ACT and the PATRIOT ACT, known as the “material support” bar, defines “terrorist” in such a manner that anyone who offered support to terrorist organizations is grouped under the name—even those people who may have been forced into giving such support out of fear for their lives or the lives of loved ones, or support was inadvertent.

The refugee admission numbers evinces the devastating effect the material support bar has had on the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Though 70,000 refugee admissions were authorized in 2006, only 41,269 refugees arrived that year. Even lower numbers are expected for 2007. The U.S. Refugee Program has never experienced such a threat since its inception.

### **ACTION**

Call your congressperson and ask him or her to amend the REAL ID ACT of 2005 and the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 so that exceptions are created for asylum seekers who were forced into providing, or inadvertently provided, support to terrorist groups. Also ask for a narrow definition of “terrorist organization” and “terrorist acts,” which previously had been defined far too broadly.

---

---

## *Contacting Elected Officials*

### **White House**

*Mailing Address*

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

*Phone Number*

Comments: (202) 456-1111  
Fax: (202) 456-2461

*E-mail*

President George W. Bush:  
president@whitehouse.gov

Vice President Richard Cheney:  
vice.president@whitehouse.gov

### **Congress**

*Mailing Address*

United States Senate  
*or*

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

*Phone Number*

Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121

*E-mail*

Visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) to  
use your representatives' e-mail contact forms.

**American Ethical Union** ▪ 2 West 64<sup>th</sup> Street ▪ New York, NY 10023

---

**American Humanist Association** ▪ 1777 T Street, NW ▪ Washington, DC 20009

Editor: Karen Frantz (800) 837-3792  
[report@americanhumanist.org](mailto:report@americanhumanist.org)