

National News

Supreme Court allows execution stays for habeas

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled on June 30 that federal judges can postpone executions of convicts who have exhausted their state appeals, to give them a chance to obtain lawyers for a federal review of their cases, according to the July 1 *New York Times*. The 5-4 ruling in a Texas case opens up the possibility of further *habeas* review for scores of death row inmates and could prove to be the turning point in the court's analysis of *habeas corpus* petitions.

The decision marks a reversal of recent court rulings that had moved to restrict the use of *habeas* petitions: The Texas case suggests that a new majority has emerged that is unwilling to cut back the *habeas* process much further.

The ruling revolves around a financially indigent man who came within hours of death as two lower federal courts refused a stay of execution, in holding that they had no jurisdiction over any aspects of the case because the man hadn't filed a *habeas* petition. The man argued that without the stay of execution, he would die before finding a lawyer to prepare a petition. At the last minute, the Supreme Court granted a stay at the request of two volunteer lawyers.

Bishops urge universal health care, no abortion

The U.S. Catholic bishops held a press conference in Washington, D.C. on July 14 to release a letter to the congressional leadership, urging that the final form of health care legislation include universal coverage and exclude abortion. The Catholic Church in America operates approximately 10% of all health care facilities.

The letter is signed by Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore, president of the National Council of Catholic Bishops; Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles, chairman of the Pro-Life Activities Committee; and Bishop John H. Ricard of Balti-

more, chairman of the Domestic Policy Committee. Speaking for Mahony, who was unable to attend, was Bishop James McHugh of Camden, New Jersey, who is also a leader on the Pro-Life Committee.

The bishops said that a recent poll they had commissioned showed that 70% of Americans support universal coverage, but that if abortion were included in that coverage, it would turn "millions of advocates into adversaries of reform legislation." The church, they point out, "is deeply involved in health care as a major provider and purchaser of care and as a community which helps pick up the pieces when our system fails. We have worked for comprehensive health care reform for decades." They urge, finally, that congressional compromise on the bill "not come at the expense of the unborn, the unserved, the undocumented, and the uninsured."

Colin Powell weighs in for Coleman and Wilder

Gen. Colin L. Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under George Bush, gave \$1,000 to the independent U.S. Senate campaigns of both Republican Marshall Coleman and former Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder, a Democrat. Coleman, who ran against Wilder for governor in 1989, entered the race for the seat held by Sen. Chuck Robb (D) in order to stop the Republican nominee, Oliver North. According to the July 13 issue of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Powell said in May that he couldn't support North because of North's role in the Iran-Contra scandal.

Meantime, Vice President Al Gore called Doug Wilder to the White House on July 14, to ask him to drop out of the race. After the short meeting, Wilder said, "there is not a scintilla of a chance that I would not complete the run" for U.S. Senate. Gore said in a statement later, that he wanted "to tell him in person that I hope he will end up supporting the candidacy of Senator Robb for reelection, as I do."

In a related development, an independent committee formed by former Democratic primary candidate Nancy Spannaus to

expose North as the drug-runner that he is, announced the availability of its bumper stickers: "Defeat Ollie North, that Son-of-a-Bush."

California to base risk assessment on fears

A soon-to-be-released report commissioned by the state of California would base environmental risk assessment on public perception and fear, instead of scientific data. *Los Angeles Times* reporter Frank Clifford obtained an advance copy of the 640-page report. In a recent article that has appeared in local papers throughout the state, he quotes John Moore, a former official of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a member of the advisory committee overseeing the study: "This is the first major project of its kind in the country that basically owned up to the fact that totally relying on experts and technical data is too narrow an approach."

The controversial report is supposed to provide guidelines for the California EPA. Clifford notes that even some environmentalists are "leery." Clifford quotes Lawrie Mott, a scientist with the radical ecology lobby Natural Resources Defense Council, who helped engineer the alar scare, "There are some squishy areas that can make you a bit queasy. No doubt about that."

Privatized Florida school shows poor performance

The *Virginian Pilot* on July 14 carried an article, "School Privatization Firm Flunks Test in Florida," referring to the failure of the school privatization firm Education Alternatives, Inc. to show positive results. According to the *Pilot*, EAI's flagship Southpointe Elementary School has failed to improve academic performance after three years, reported Dade County, Florida, school officials. Test results at Southpointe were no different from any of the public schools in the system.

Briefly

The superintendent said he likes the company's teaching program, "but to think that EAI is the answer to the woes of public education is absolutely ludicrous." He said that the test results there should quiet those who contend that privatization is the answer to problems with the public school system.

The *Virginian Pilot* lists this as part of an ongoing series of setbacks for EAI: In June, the company admitted it falsely reported test scores in Baltimore. The city subsequently released its own study showing that EAI had not improved test scores and reported that it would delay expansion of EAI contracts; also in June, Maryland state officials concluded that EAI had violated federal requirements for teaching learning impaired students. In Hartford, Connecticut, officials have backed off plans to have EAI run the school system. Instead they have called for competitive bids from several companies, including EAI, to serve as a consultant for one year for no guaranteed fee.

Riverboat gambling, term limitation on D.C. ballot

Two initiatives will likely be on the November ballot in Washington, D.C., since the required petition signatures were handed in at the July 11 deadline:

● Riverboat gambling: Meeting the deadline, after repeated challenges, was an initiative to permit riverboat gambling. Brenda Parker, treasurer of the group backing riverboat gambling, filed more than 45,000 signatures toward the required 16,435. Backers say that riverboat gambling is expected to generate \$200 million for the nation's capital and create 15,000 jobs. Among those whom supporters recruited to gather petitions were homeless D.C. residents, who were paid up to \$1.75 per name. Games permitted by the initiative include, but are not limited to: baccarat, bingo, craps, keno, poker, roulette, slot machines, blackjack, and wheel of fortune.

The gambling measure has survived two court challenges. In May, an earlier riverboat gambling initiative was thrown out because of "inconsistencies in the language."

A reworded initiative was approved by the elections board.

● Term limitation: The Coalition for Citizen Empowerment handed in more than 32,000 signatures to place an initiative on the ballot to limit D.C. politicians to two consecutive terms. It would not prohibit non-consecutive terms. The coalition paid some of its petitioners 50¢ a name in order to meet the deadline.

A third initiative to allow "student-led prayer in the District's public schools," did not meet the signature requirement to appear on the ballot. Backers of this initiative will continue to gather signatures up to the Dec. 27 deadline to appear on the April ballot if there is a special city council election.

Dakota lawmakers briefed on LaRouche forecast

Ron Wieczorek, a leader of the Food for Peace movement in South Dakota, testified on July 11 before a special session of the state legislature that had been convened to consider the state Supreme Court's ban on video gambling. "I want to point your attention to a much larger gambling problem," Wieczorek said. "One year ago Lyndon LaRouche warned that the \$14 trillion which our nation's banks are gambling in the financial derivatives market was sucking capital out of the producers of our economy and also sucking capital out of transportation, energy, and water systems. He urged measures to deflate the bubble. The bubble is 35% bigger now. LaRouche now proves it will inevitably burst, and soon, bringing down our entire financial system in a matter of days."

Wieczorek urged the lawmakers to reject the allure of making up for falling state revenues by turning to gambling: "The very same mob-related bankers who speculate on farm loans and farm commodities here in South Dakota, and who are rumored to be financing the high-stakes gambling casinos . . . such as the friends of Minneapolis mob banker Carl Pohlad, are merely frontmen for the bigger speculators . . . of New York and London."

● A MAJORITY of the Congressional Black Caucus opposes an invasion of Haiti, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on July 17. "The black caucus has never voted on the question of an invasion, but if put to a vote, members on both sides say it would lose."

● A NEW ROPER POLL shows that only 1% of Americans think the Nazi Holocaust did not happen. Last year, a Roper poll released by the American Jewish Committee seemed to show that 22% thought so. However, the polling was based on a question that contained a double negative, thereby skewing the results.

● A CLEVELAND federal judge has issued a restraining order against the school board to halt the layoff of 500 of the expected 750 school employees that had previously been announced. He said that if an agreement is not reached, he will impose budget cuts himself.

● FOUR LAROUCHE Democrats running for Congress in Virginia have received notice of their certification for the November ballot: Matt B. Voorhees, 1st C.D., is running against incumbent Herb Bateman (R); Jerry Berg, 7th C.D., is the only challenger to incumbent Tom Bliley (R); William C. Jones, in the 8th C.D., faces incumbent Democrat James Moran; and Alan Ogden is running in Lyndon LaRouche's home district (10th) against incumbent Frank Wolf (R).

● LOUIS FARRAKHAN is a factor in the New York congressional race, according to the *Boston Globe* of July 18. Farrakhan's Nation of Islam is backing Eric Adams, a candidate opposing Congressional Black Caucus member Major Owens, because of Owens's denunciation of the NOI in the House of Representatives. Adams called Owens "a hustler" and said, "Farrakhan is not the issue here. It's these abandoned buildings."