



SHEPHERDS SPEAK

VOICES THAT CHALLENGE

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THE NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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People often say that, in a democracy, decisions are made by a majority of the people. Of course, that is not true. Decisions are made by a majority of those who make themselves heard and who vote -- a very different thing.

Walter H. Judd



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In All Things The Will Of God

A reflection by Sr. Gayle Lwanga

It is important to reflect on what happened in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania so that we don't miss the valuable lesson that the "plain people" who inhabit Amish Country have to offer us. On October 2, Charles Carl Roberts IV, committed an act of unspeakable violence against the Amish community. He shot 10 young girls, killing five of them.

The entire country was shocked by the enormity of the tragedy, coupled with its senselessness. Then we really began to be stunned by the response of the Amish community. They said things like, "it was the will of God," "we forgive him," "do not think evil of this man," and expressed concern for the family of Charles Roberts.

I have to confess that I was taken aback when I heard one young Amish woman say that it was the will of God. Everything in me rebelled against this notion, this kind of spirituality. How could it be the will of God for five children to be killed in this particularly brutal way? I had to pray about this for a long time, and I still have more work to do to move it into my heart. I went to the little book on St. John Eudes written by Clément Guillon, C.J.M. titled, *In All Things The Will Of God*. St. John Eudes urges us to see the hand of God in painful events.

I believe that God also didn't want us to miss the response of reconciliation and mercy that has come forth from a community of people who have chosen to be removed from the world in order



Amish Funeral Procession

to live simply with each other and with God. Their response was to put into practice what they believe:

"Let your gentle spirit be known to all (men). The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
—Philippians 4: 4-7

When we see the hand of God in painful events, we know that God is with us in our sorrow. St. John Eudes says that "in this hour of affliction, you can offer him more glory and love in a single moment than in several days during a time of consolation. Do not deprive him, then of something so tremendous which you can and ought to give him easily by submitting your will to his." Now we have a modern day example of how this is done. The next act of terror, the next injustice may be just around the bend. May our response have the power to change hearts as we act out of our beliefs, and not out of our very human nature.

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We Miss You, Paul Wellstone

By David Morris, AlterNet. Posted October 1, 2006.

The National Advocacy Center is a non-partisan advocacy ministry. We wanted to publish this remembrance of Paul Wellstone because he was a champion of many of the causes that are important to Good Shepherd; he worked for peace, the environment, health care, and the rights of victims of domestic violence. It is important to reflect on what would have been his response to current legislation.

Four years ago this month Paul Wellstone was taken from us. Today, more than ever, American politics suffers from his absence.

A few days ago, Senate Democrats agreed not to filibuster a bill allowing the President to detain indefinitely, even for life, any alien, whether in the United States or abroad, whether a foreign resident or a lawful permanent resident. The bill denies prisoners the right to challenge their detention in court.

Why would Democrats allow 51 Senators to eliminate one of the fundamental pillars of free societies? I imagine it was because their pollsters told them a vigorous opposition would lose them votes in the upcoming election as Republicans pummeled them for being soft on terrorism.

Paul would have filibustered. That would almost certainly have delayed a Senate vote until after the election, enabling Americans to more clearly demonstrate how they stand on the 800-year old right of habeas corpus.

Three weeks before he died, Paul voted against war in Iraq. At the time, his opponent was aggressively accusing Paul of being weak on national security. Polls told Paul a vote against war would lose him the election. But as he told the Washington Post two days after the vote, "I think people want you to do what you think is right." He then added, in typical Wellstone fashion, "how would I have had the enthusiasm and the fight if I had actually cast a

vote I didn't believe in? I couldn't do that."

A few days later Paul delighted in the fact that his vote resulted in a surge of support among Minnesotans, a surge that almost certainly would have led to his reelection.



Sen. Paul Wellstone

Paul knew how to filibuster. Single-handedly, his filibusters prevented a remarkably inequitable bankruptcy bill from being passed while he was in the Senate.

And he knew how to speak truth to power. When Exxon, the number one oil company, gobbled up number two Mobil, and the number one grain company, Cargill devoured runner-up Continental Grain, and the number one bank, Citicorp snapped up Travelers Insurance, the silence from Washington was deafening. The New York Times observed, "scarcely a politician of any stripe headed for the cameras" to question "whether the deals were good for the country, for workers or for consumers."

Except one. "Senator Paul Wellstone, the Minnesota Democrat is among the few in Congress still exercised about the concentration of corporate power".

In 1996, Wellstone was among the very few who voted against the Telecommunications Act. He argued it would lead to concentrated ownership. He was right. Over the next 22 months, more than 1,000 radio stations were sold. Some 450 owners left the field. Single companies now dominate local radio broadcasting.

In 1996, Paul bravely voted against ending the na-

We Miss You, Paul Wellstone

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tion's commitment to the poor. Again, he was the only politician running for re-election who did so. "If you want to reduce poverty, stop scapegoating people," he said. "Start focusing on a good education and a good job."

Paul Wellstone proposed as well as opposed. For example, when the United States tried one more time to join the rest of the industrialized world in making access to medical care a right, not a privilege, Wellstone helped organize a grassroots coalition that gained consider-



Sen. Paul Wellstone hugs
Sr. Gabriel Herbers

able support in Congress in favor of a system similar to Canada's 30 year old program: a single insurer, local control, and private suppliers.

But it was in his opposition that he most clearly demonstrated both his character, and his uniqueness. On this anniversary of his death, we sorely miss his courage and leadership.

David Morris is co-founder and vice president of the [Institute for Local Self Reliance](#) in Minneapolis, Minnesota and director of its [New Rules](#) project.

Contemplative Stance and the Contemplative Lifestyle

By Sr. Mary Ann Giordano, CGS



The "contemplative stance" makes us choose what we will look at, how we will look at it and where we will opt to stand and take action.

The contemplative stance would see, not just a sad situation but the living and breathing people of whom we are a part. Their pain becomes our pain and no matter what the cause of their pain, we understand it because we too have experienced pain. When we can look through the problem to the person, then we can begin to know compassion, the fruit of a contemplative stance.

It is possible to put up wall that interfere with seeing the reality that the world presents to us. These walls may be fabricated by deeply ingrained prejudices fostered by the habit of viewing situations, countries, people from a position of power, making oneself the standard by which all else is judged.

It is sometimes easy to become judgmental and blaming of those who live in grinding poverty with all the problems it entails. This stance is diametrically opposed to the contemplative stance that allows us to see with eyes rinsed by compassion.

Compassion urges us to sacrifice a weekend to join with others, in spite of the winter cold or summer heat to march in a demonstration in order to bring the plight of others to center stage. It causes us to put on hold our plans for a restful evening after work and go door-to-door handing out flyers advising voters of important upcoming issues and encouraging a course of political action. This compassion urges us to overcome our natural shyness and become a member of a group that will pay a visit to members of Congress trying to enlist their support on important issues.

There are those who have carefully tried to nurture a contemplative stance and allow the river of Compassion to drench their souls. They are the Good Shepherd Contemplative Sisters. Can these Sisters 'act' in the cause of **Cont'd on p. 8**

Legislative Update

By Alison Prevost

“Do Nothing” Congress?

This year that label certainly seems appropriate, with the budget left incomplete, no real progress on immigration reform, and important issues like increasing the minimum wage sidelined by election year politics. On a positive note, Congress did take action to address the worsening situation in Darfur by passing the “Darfur Peace and Accountability Act” (H.R. 3127) and providing additional funding for the African Union (AMIS) peacekeeping force just before the election recess.

However, in a terrible blow to both human rights and constitutional protections, both the House and Senate passed and the president recently signed into law the “Military Commissions Act” which gives the president the authority to continue the practice of indefinite detention of detainees and undermines the Geneva conventions. Perhaps it is best to say that Congress has done little positive on the issues that matter to the National Advocacy Center, making the need for change and for an infusion of Good Shepherd values in the political sphere all the more critical.

Another Tough Appropriations Cycle

After several years of reporting essentially the same news every fall, I think it is safe to say that the budget process under current congressional leadership is fundamentally broken. When Congress recessed at the end of September they had only completed two (Defense and Homeland Security) of the annual appropriations bills that fund discretionary government programs. Since the new fiscal year began Oct 1st, members were again forced to support a “continuing resolution” that will keep programs operating until November 17th (the week Congress is scheduled to return) at last year’s funding level or the level in the House or Senate passed appropriations bill, whichever is the lowest.

Many of the programs that we care about will con-

tinue to be funded at last year’s level since they are included in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, which neither the House or the Senate has passed. Passage of the Labor-HHS bill has been delayed because of ongoing disputes over inadequate funding levels with

many moderates still demanding that a total of \$7 billion be added to ensure that cuts don’t occur. Meeting this demand will be difficult because Congress agreed to a tight budget cap and recently the conference committee on the Defense appropriations bill decided to shift \$4 billion from human needs programs back into defense because of a veto threat from the President.

As it stands now, Labor-HHS appropriations are \$4-5 billion short of

what is needed to maintain current service levels—meaning that a number of critical programs (child care, Head Start, job training, substance abuse treatment, community food and nutrition, and many more) will likely be cut again, some for the 5th consecutive year!

It remains unclear how Congress will proceed when members return after the elections. Many advocates anticipate another “omnibus” appropriations bill, which will likely include even deeper cuts than originally proposed. Others suggest the possibility of a year-long “continuing resolution,” which would also mean further erosion of services due to inflation. What is clear is that congressional budget priorities remain woefully off track and disconnected from the real needs of our country. Many groups are working hard this election season to elevate the need for better budget priorities and we encourage you to add your voice to the effort!

A Fence Vs. Real Immigration Reform

The stalemate on immigration mostly continued during the brief September session as House leaders still refused to allow a conference committee to meet to try to resolve the vast differences between the House and Senate immigration bills.



Legislative Update

Cont'd

into separate pieces of legislation and hold “message” votes before the election. The bills that passed the House include the “Border Tunnel Prevention Act” (H.R. 4830), the “Community Protection Act” (H.R. 6094), the “Immigration Law Enforcement Act” (H.R. 6095), and the “Secure Fence Act” (H.R. 6061), and raise most of the same objections from immigrant advocacy groups as did the original House bill. None of the bills passed by the House does anything to address the problems of visa backlogs, employment needs, and the situation of the 12 million undocumented immigrants.

Fortunately, the Senate chose not to take up most of the measures, though it did approve the “Secure Fence Act” just before the recess. This bill is troubling because it authorizes the construction of a 700-mile fence along the 2000-mile U.S. border with Mexico and grants broad new authority to the Secretary of Homeland Security in relation to

border enforcement. However, Congress did not provide sufficient funding to provide for the costs of H.R. 6061, so it remains to be seen what the legislation will accomplish. As one immigrant advocacy group puts it in a recent press release, “Our Congress debated immigration reform for two years, and all we got was this lousy fence bill?”

The need for comprehensive and compassionate immigration reform remains clear, but it is unlikely to happen this year. Still, despite some of the strongly anti-immigrant messages of some campaigns this fall, support continues to build for a holistic and realistic approach to our immigration problems and perhaps a new Congress will be able to move beyond the roadblocks set up by the current one.

Minimum Wage

Despite some promising developments earlier in the year (a majority vote in the Senate in support of an amendment to increase the minimum wage,

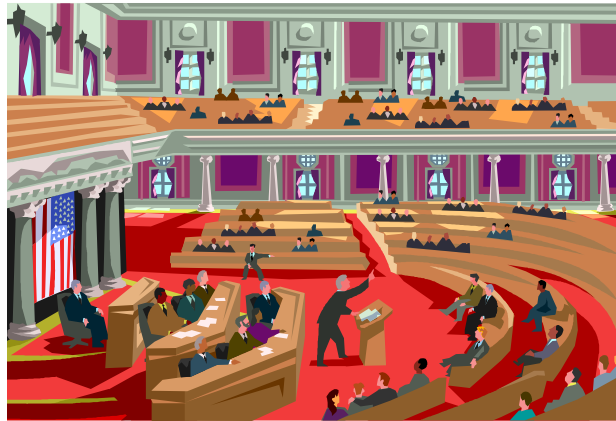
a new minimum wage discharge petition in the House, and the House minimum wage amendment to the Labor-HHS appropriations bill), Congress recessed without passing a much needed increase in the minimum wage. One minimum wage bill did move in both the House and the Senate, but was opposed by most human needs advocates because it tied an increase in the minimum wage to a huge cut in the estate tax that would have provided a windfall to millionaires and driven the federal budget further into the red. This “trifecta” bill passed the House and was only narrowly defeated in the Senate just prior to the August recess. Negotiations took place throughout September in an effort to revive the “trifecta” bill, but these stalled over disagreements on a variety of tax issues.

Rumors continue to circulate that the “trifecta” bill or other minimum wage legislation could be part of a “lame duck” session after the elections, but it remains unlikely that a “clean” minimum wage increase will pass during this Congress. Advocates are working at the state level to build momentum for raising the federal minimum wage and a number of states have ballot initiatives this election to increase their state minimum wage. Hopefully these efforts will translate into leadership at the federal level also and a broader conversation about how to “make work pay” in our country.

Looking Ahead

Looking Ahead

Although Congress will return to DC after the November election, most analysts anticipate a short session to wrap up the year’s budget work and perhaps a few other minor issues. Of course, there could always be some surprises and we will be sure to keep you posted throughout the “lame duck” session on any important action items. In the meantime, we hope you will use the information we provide to hold all congressional candidates’ feet “to the fire” about these and other critical issues.



Preparing for the Elections



On November 7th, 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 33 Senate seats will be determined as millions of Americans cast their votes.

This election will

be critical in shaping the priorities for the next two years. Who we elect will have a direct impact on the availability and quality of social programs and services, the direction of our foreign policy, and hopefully, the tone of the debate as well.

However, for positive change to occur, people committed to justice, peace, and compassion must be active players in the elections and the political and legislative processes that follow—demanding moral leadership and accountability from those who aspire

Good Shepherd Values

Individual Worth

Mercy

Reconciliation

Zeal

to be our leaders!

This year, we've put a little extra effort into helping Good Shepherd Advocates make an informed decision at the polls. The National Advocacy Center has developed a new voter guide, "Voting Good Shepherd Values," which, while not exhaustive, addresses a wide range of issues, particularly those on which you have charged the NAC to work. A very brief summary is included below, but the full guide is available at our website for you to download and print

or read online: <http://>

www.gsadvocacy.org/2006election_guide.pdf.

A Quick Overview

NAC issue priorities are guided by Catholic Social Teaching and the continuing mission of the Sisters of

the Good Shepherd to promote justice, reconciliation and peace. Our aim is not, should not, and cannot be to endorse a particular party, candidate, or platform; rather, it is to try to reshape the overall political debate, to generate a real conversation about values and priorities, and to bring new voices to the table that truly respect human life and dignity, are committed to the common good, and will work toward a holistic vision of security.

We enter this election season with many questions for the candidates:

- What do they have to say about poverty, both national and global?
- How do they address the question of immigration? What language do they use to talk about immigrants?
- What will they do to help ensure that all members of society have access to affordable, quality healthcare?
- Do they have a plan to help bring peace to Iraq and to help strengthen non-military means of conflict resolution?
- How will they work to protect human rights and dignity at home and abroad?

- How will they work to elevate the political dialogue? What values guide their campaigns?

Getting answers to these and other questions is a difficult task, but fortunately there are many groups that collect and analyze information to help voters out. We've compiled a list of resources on our website (and in the guide also)—<http://www.gsadvocacy.org/votered.html>—that can help you find some of the information, but we encourage you to keep an eye on your local papers, watch the debates, talk to friends, family, and community members, and even try to attend a campaign event or two if you are able.

As we have heard many people say in Washington, saying nothing to our elected leaders is saying something. We get the kind of leadership we ask for when we fail to speak up for those living

in poverty or for other vulnerable people in society—we get none. With just a few weeks left before the election, let us work and pray hard for the moral leadership that our country desperately needs.

Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

Human Life and Dignity

Community and the Common Good

Participation

Option for the Poor

Dignity of Work/Rights of Workers

Stewardship of Creation

Solidarity



2007 Legislative Priorities

Once again it is time for the National Advocacy Center (NAC) to begin shaping next year's legislative agenda. It is important that the priorities of this office reflect the needs and concerns of Good Shepherd people, agencies and communities.

Your input is critical to our work because you are the best source for information about what issues are most important "on the ground." Our advocacy must be focused so that our efforts yield the maximum benefit to agencies, programs and individuals we serve in ministry.

It has been our experience that the priorities haven't change that much from year to year. Some issues increase in importance while others may diminish, but hardly ever does an issue fade from our priorities list.

2006 Priorities

The Advocacy Center uses a three tiered format that enables us to prioritize the issues that are lifted up by you, our constituency.

LEVEL ONE is the highest priority, requires NAC to take a leading role through proactive and intensive advocacy, lobbying and research.

Enhance Social Investment

- Preserving and improving the Social Safety Net
- Budget Fairness
- Domestic Violence

Increase Access to Healthcare

- Covering the uninsured
- Improving Mental Healthcare

LEVEL TWO requires monitoring, some joint lobbying with coalition partners, and reactive strategies, such as letters and alerts.

Promote Human and Economic Security

- Human Trafficking
- Juvenile Justice
- Living Wage

LEVEL THREE monitor and address through work with coalitions and occasional alerts.

Foster Reconciliation Nationally and Globally

- Immigration
- Peace initiatives
- Global Economic Justice



Lobby Day activities have also been a part of our legislative priorities survey. We have decided to collaborate with our coalition partners and join them for Ecumenical Advocacy Days on March 9-12, 2006. This event enables us to not only meet as a group but also to share in the workshops offered by others that cover a wide range of interests. The NAC staff will always facilitate the arrangements for lobby visits during this time.

This year's survey will go out very soon, we are hoping to make it available on our website so that it can be completed online and sent back to our office electronically.

This is one of the most important activities that the National Advocacy Center enters into all year. In the past our rates of participation have been exceptional. We thank you in advance for your help in setting our legislative priorities for 2007.



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“Charity and Justice bind us to each other.”

St. Mary Euphrasia (Foundress, Sisters of the Good Shepherd)

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Contemplative Stance and the Contemplative Lifestyle

Cont’d from p. 3

Social Justice when their outward activities are limited by their Enclosure and contemplative life style?

I have seen the various ways that the Contemplative are able to make an impact. First, they keep current with world, national and local events through reading, the media and the information sent out by our own Social Justice groups such as The National Advocacy Center, the Good Shepherd International Commission for Justice, and the mailings from our NGO Representative to the U.N., Sr. Clare Nolan.

After becoming attuned to the situation how do the Contemplative Sisters make their voices heard? One way is by raising their voices through telephone calls, letter writing, e-mailing, writing editorials for the daily newspaper. In some circumstances, it has meant changing their buying habits, joining boycotts and speaking with store managers when shopping encouraging them to stock other products. Some Com-

munities have opted to set aside a specific amount of money to support one of the Social Justice movements or subscribe to certain Social Justice periodicals. Some try to enlist the help of the people with whom they do day-to-day business encouraging them to make phone calls or write letters.

The most important part of the Contemplative Sisters contribution is their Prayer. Praying not only for those who are the object of grave concern but also for those who perpetrate acts of injustice. Remembered also are all those who work in the cause of Social Justice that they will not be discouraged by opposition or lack of success.

The Contemplative Sisters are very much a part of social justice action and feel united with everyone who yearns that justice might fall from the heavens like rain.

