

TEXAS PRESS ASSOCIATION

State Capital



HIGHLIGHTS

By Ed Sterling

Federal court rules on same-sex marriage

AUSTIN - In the final week before Tuesday, March 4, Primary Election Day, candidates put on final pushes in hopes of getting enough votes to be their party's nominee for the general election in November.

A ruling by a San Antonio federal court on Feb. 26 moved a hot-button issue front and center, giving candidates a last-minute opportunity to delineate their stand. In a case brought by two same-sex couples, San Antonio U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia declared unconstitutional the Texas law and a related state constitutional amendment that prohibit same-sex marriage and the recognition of out-of-state same-sex marriages. On page 46 of his ruling, Garcia wrote, "Equal treatment of all individuals under the law is not merely an aspiration - it is a constitutional mandate. Consequently, equal protection is at the heart of our legal system and is essential for the existence of a free society."

Right away, however, Garcia placed a stay on his order preventing the state from enforcing those laws, pending an appeal filed by the Texas attorney general's office in the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals.

Gov. Rick Perry reacted, saying, "It is not the role of the federal government to overturn the will of our citizens. The 10th Amendment guarantees Texas voters the freedom to make these decisions and this is yet

another attempt to achieve via the courts what couldn't be achieved at the ballot box."

Texas Roman Catholic Bishops issued a joint statement expressing disappointment in the court's decision.

"Good, well-meaning people on both sides" of the issue," said Texas Attorney General and GOP gubernatorial candidate Greg Abbott. But, he added, "The Texas Constitution defines marriage as between one man and one woman. If the Fifth Circuit honors those precedents, then today's decision should be overturned and the Texas Constitution will be upheld."

Texas Democratic Party Chairman Gilberto Hinojosa, in a statement released after Judge Garcia's ruling, said: "The Texas Democratic Party believes that everyone should have the right to be with the person they love and we look forward to the day in Texas when everyone can marry who they love. This is a historic day for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual) community and the state of Texas. As Dr. (Martin Luther) King (Jr.) once stated, 'The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.' Today, all Texans can celebrate that we are one step closer to justice and equality for all."

Awareness day is proclaimed

Gov. Perry proclaimed Feb. 27 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Texas, saying the key "to preventing and ending this horrible crime is public awareness that millions still suffer exploitation around the nation and the world."

He urged Texans to join him "in bringing awareness to this important issue as we continue to fight to bring justice to human trafficking offenders, and help to their victims."

Schools achieve progress

State Comptroller Susan Combs on Feb. 26 called attention to the new "Financial Allocation Study for Texas" avail-

able at the website fastexas.org which shows an increase in school districts earning the highest ranking of five stars.

"FAST" was created by the comptroller's office in response to 2009 legislation directing the agency to "identify school districts and campuses that use resource allocation practices that contribute to high academic achievement and cost-effective operations."

"I am pleased to see more schools being better stewards of our citizens' tax dollars while achieving better academic outcomes," Combs said.

Chair lauds pipeline progress

Barry Smitherman, Texas Railroad Commission chairman and Republican candidate for the office of Texas attorney general, spoke in Beaumont Feb. 26 in a ceremony marking the "start of operation" of TransCanada's Gulf Coast Pipeline Project.

"On behalf of the Texas Railroad Commission and the people of Texas, I welcome the Gulf Coast Pipeline project and look forward to hearing that the Keystone XL Pipeline, its northern leg, is approved as soon as possible in Washington, D.C."

A presidential permit has not been granted to complete the project.

Interim charges announced

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst on Feb. 26 publicized interim charges for the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice.

Dewhurst, who presides over the Senate and is campaigning to be the Republican Party's nominee for lieutenant governor in the November general election, asked the committee to study and make recommendations on "health within the prison system" and "jail diversion for mentally ill" before the next Texas Legislature convenes in regular session in January 2015.

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freed him from the oppression and depression of feeling doomed for his lack of perfection. It freed him from all self-condemnation and wherever it has been lovingly preached, it has given the same freedom for countless others.

Luther's path into transformation began when he started teaching the Psalms. He had Johannes Gutenberg, the University printer, make him a personal psalter with wide margins. As he studied he wrote in the margins the insights he was gaining for himself. By so doing, he was wiping the sacred page clean of all the Church's past glosses and interpretations. His fresh start proved salvific for him.

Luther introduced a new definition of the literal sense of scripture. He did not mean literal as other scholars did. Others meant the author's original intention in its historical context, but not Luther. He meant by literal the Christological meaning of the scripture. "What else is there?" he asked. Actually, even in the New Testament, some books were more Christ-centered than others, and there is a great deal more you can find in the Bible than Christ. And Luther discovered this as he became more familiar with the whole Bible. Much of it had little to do with Christ. This caused Luther to create a canon within the canon of what he thought were the most important and spiritual books.

He exalted the letters of Paul to preeminence as many others were doing in this period. He felt they were much more important than even the synoptic gospels which were about the historical pre-Easter Christ. Many in this era were devaluing the historical Christ. This was and is a mistake, as the pre-Easter historical Christ is our example and Lord. It is his teaching that we are to follow. It is his humanity that is our greatest comfort. It says to us that what Christ did we to can do. The post-Easter risen Christ mythologically placed at God's right hand is very important to us also, but only if we are trying to follow the very human pre-Easter Jesus. The very human Jesus of Nazareth became the exalted Christ after his resurrection as the Church reflected upon and sought to explain the meaning of Jesus.

Luther's canon within a canon also highly valued I Peter, but relegated Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation to the ignored periphery. (James has always been one of my favorites, but Luthor despised it for he felt it overemphasized the importance of good works.)

Luther did the same thing with the Old Testament. If a book did not have clear Christological value, he dismissed it. He placed aside the 15 books of the Apocrypha that the Catholic Church approved for their devotional and historical value. He paid almost no

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