

FRIDAY BRIEF

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House Defeats the Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act

The House of Representatives rejected an important bill yesterday which would have allowed religious leaders the freedom to talk about politics and make endorsements. The Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act (HR 2357) of Rep. Walter B. Jones Jr. (R-NC) challenged the existing prohibition on political activity imposed in 1954 by Congress on all 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations under an amendment offered by Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson.

If passed, HR 2357 would have effectively relieved churches, synagogues and mosques from the Internal Revenue Service's ban on political activities that are important to their lives and futures.

Rep. Jones Congress assured that he will continue to fight "to return First Amendment rights to our houses of worship."

Controversy over New Jersey's Senatorial Race

New Jersey undergoes a legal dispute over the race. The New Jersey Supreme Court yesterday agreed to let Democrats replace the name of embattled Sen. Robert G. Torricelli with that of Frank Lautenberg on the ballot in next month's election. Sen. Torricelli, who has been embroiled in an ethics controversy, dropped out of the Senate race Monday. Democrats announced late Tuesday they want former Sen. Frank Lautenberg to take Mr. Torricelli's place on the ballot.

New Jersey state law says a statewide candidate can drop out 51 days or more before the election. Mr. Torricelli dropped out with 36 days left.

Doug Forrester, the Republican Senate candidate filed a petition on Thursday with the U.S. Supreme Court challenging court's decision to allow former Sen. Frank Lautenberg to replace Sen. Torricelli on the New Jersey ballot. The petition asks for a hearing before the full U.S. Supreme Court and a stay of the New Jersey Supreme Court's order. The emergency application for a stay of enforcement went directly to Justice David Souter.

The State Supreme Court's decision has overridden the state legislature which states those 51 days before an election, a candidate for federal office -- a candidate for any office -- can leave the ballot. After 51 days, you can't leave the ballot. Reprinting the ballots 34 days before election might not be enough to get the absentee ballots for military personnel with the new democratic candidate.

Islamic Institutes joins in the Call for Reform

On Friday, October 4, 2002, the Islamic Institute attends the Interfaith Alliance Foundation's conference on Campaign Finance Reform: an Issue of Faith in which a number of prominent religious and political leaders who will speak on the intersection of faith and campaign finance reform.

For more Information, visit www.interfaithalliance.org or www.callforreform.org

