

Richard Land apologizes for comments on Trayvon Martin case

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c. 2012 Religion News Service (RNS) The Southern Baptist Convention's top public policy official has apologized for controversial comments he made about the Trayvon Martin case, and the New Orleans pastor who's widely expected to be named the Southern Baptists' first black president has accepted his apology.

Richard Land, who leads the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, wrote to SBC president Bryant Wright to express his "deep regret for any hurt or misunderstanding" his comments may have caused.

"It grieves me to hear that any comments of mine have to any degree set back the cause of racial reconciliation in Southern Baptist or American life," Land wrote, according to a letter released by Baptist Press, the denomination's official news agency.

The letter came after Wright and Land discussed how many African-Americans and Christians had been offended by Land's March 31 comments, in which he accused Democrats and civil rights leaders of exploiting the killing of the unarmed Florida teen.

"In talking with Richard, I found a receptivity to apologize for the comments he had made," Wright told Baptist Press. Land sent the open letter to Wright, and asked for it to be shared with the Rev. Fred Luter, the New Orleans pastor expected to be elected the SBC's first African-American president in June.

Luter, who had previously expressed concern about Land's statement, told Baptist Press he accepted Land's apology.

"Our convention has made a lot of progress in the area of racial reconciliation and we want to continue this effort," Luter said. "Dr. Land's letter of apology will hopefully keep us on track."

Land had issued another apology for failing to properly attribute the material he used when speaking about the Martin case on his radio show.