

SBC meeting rejects human-caused warming, government solutions: Child abuse and hate crimes resolutions too

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The Southern Baptist Convention has rejected scientific claims that humans are to blame for global warming and dismissed governmental efforts to reverse it.

The delegates (called messengers) did not object to claims in the SBC annual meeting's global-warming resolution that "scientific evidence does not support computer models of catastrophic human-induced global warming" and that major steps to reduce greenhouse gases would unfairly impact the world's poorest people. They deleted the resolutions committee's call for the U.S. government to do something about climate change. One messenger, Bob Carpenter of Cedar Street Baptist Church in Holt, Michigan, objected to the continued spending of tax dollars in search of solutions and said that private enterprise could do the job better.

Otherwise, Southern Baptists, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, quickly approved several other resolutions June 13 without significant discussion. They included:

- *Child abuse.* Messengers expressed their "deep level of moral outrage and concern at any instance of child victimization" and recommended reporting child abuse "in a timely and forthright manner."

The resolution called for churches and convention organizations to perform criminal background checks on ministers, employees and volunteers, and it repudiated individuals who commit child abuse and "individuals, churches or other religious bodies that cover up, ignore or otherwise contribute to or condone the abuse of children."

- *Hate crimes.* While urging Americans to “avoid acts of hatred and violence toward homosexuals and transgendered people” and calling on Christians to love and show compassion for them, the resolution condemned the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 for allegedly criminalizing beliefs about homosexuality.

The proposed law, which has passed in the House and has been introduced in the Senate, provides a level of protection for homosexuals and transgendered people, the resolutions noted. But it said hate-crimes legislation “violates the U.S. Constitution’s 14th Amendment guarantee of equal protection under the law” and “criminalizes beliefs as well as action, creating a form of thought crime.”

Messengers to the SBC meeting also stood by their resolutions committee’s decision not to address a concern that church-membership rolls are artificially inflated—an issue raised before the meeting by Tom Ascol, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida.

While the convention’s annual survey claims that SBC-affiliated churches are composed of 16.3 million members, only about 6.1 million of them attend a worship service in a typical week, Ascol said.

Southern Baptists should “repent of our failure to retain responsible church membership and our widespread failure to lovingly correct church members” when they lapse from regular church attendance, he added.

Ascol’s proposal “infringed upon the honored principle of church autonomy,” responded resolutions committee chair Gerald Harris of Georgia. “The committee does not have authority to instruct churches on their membership.” -*Associated Baptist Press*