

# Briefly noted

News in the [November 27, 2007](#) issue

**Utah voters defeated** the nation's first statewide school voucher program that would have been open to all children, even those not from low- or middle-income families. The measure to grant \$500 to \$3,000, depending on family income, for each child enrolled in a private or a religious school was approved by the Utah legislature in February, but opponents forced a referendum onto the November 6 ballot. The voucher plan lost by about a 60-40 ratio, prompting Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State to say, "Lawmakers in other states should sit up and take notice."

**Kentucky governor Ernie Fletcher**, a Republican hurt by a crony-hiring scandal, lost badly November 6 in his bid for reelection, despite his election-eve order that the Ten Commandments be displayed alongside other historical documents in the state Capitol. He was defeated by Democrat Steve Beshear, 63, a former state officeholder long out of politics who made faith the centerpiece of his campaign. He cited his religious upbringing often and ran TV ads showing him standing before a church in western Kentucky.

**A group of Asian and African Anglican leaders** back from a visit to China have praised a decision by the country's ruling Communist Party to include the word *religion* in its constitution. "This is a recognition of the increasing role that the church plays in the nation's economic and social development," the Anglican leaders said after their October 21-30 visit. They met church and government officials and visited theological institutions and sites of early Christian missions. State media said the change, taken by the once-officially atheistic party at its October 15-21 national congress, was to meet demands posed by the "new situation and new tasks." In recent years, Chinese leaders have said religion can play a role in creating a "harmonious society," a term they associate with economic growth and social cohesion.