

# Briefly noted

News in the [October 19, 2004](#) issue

**The National Council of Churches** has applauded an agreement unionizing foreign farmworkers who pick cucumbers sold by the Mt. Olive Pickle Company, which the NCC had boycotted in protest of previous worker treatment. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee, the North Carolina Growers Association and the Mount Olive, North Carolina-based pickle company reached an agreement September 16 that permits workers to join the organizing committee and receive union membership benefits. The company will increase what it pays for the crops and give a financial incentive to growers who compensate farmworkers. “This agreement represents the kind of mutual benefit that we hope will become an example for all of American industry, pointing toward a new era where profits are measured not only in share values, but in human values as well,” said Bob Edgar, NCC general secretary.

**The Florida Supreme Court** has ruled that a law passed to restore Terri Schiavo’s feeding tube is unconstitutional and violates the separation of powers between the judicial, legislative and executive branches of the state government. “Terri’s Law,” passed by the Florida legislature in 2003 and immediately signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush, permitted him to override a lower court’s decision that Schiavo’s husband, Michael, could have the tube removed, presumably allowing Terri Schiavo to die. She has been in what doctors have described as a “permanent vegetative state” since 1990, when she collapsed and suffered subsequent brain damage as a result of a previously undiagnosed medical condition. In a unanimous ruling, the court said the Florida legislature improperly delegated power to the governor. “We recognize the tragic circumstances underlying this case make it difficult to put emotions aside and focus solely on the legal issue presented,” wrote Chief Justice Barbara Pariente, who authored the opinion released September 23. “However, we are a nation of laws, and we must govern our decisions by the rule of law and not by our own emotions.”

**Voters in Louisiana** have become the latest to endorse an amendment to their state constitution banning same-sex marriage. By a 78-to-22-percent majority, Louisianans approved the amendment September 18. With all precincts reporting, the vote was 618,928 in favor and 177,103 against. The measure carried every parish in the state—including the generally liberal Orleans Parish, home to the city of New Orleans. Louisiana becomes the second state in 2004 to adopt a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage by a large majority. In August, Missouri voters passed a similar amendment by a 71 percent majority. As many as 11 other states will vote on such amendments in the November 2 general election, though the legality of some of those ballot items is being contested in court by gay-rights groups.