

# Bush addresses solutions to poverty

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — In his first commencement address as president, George W. Bush on Sunday exhorted the nation to join him in wielding “the weapons of spirit” to help the poor.

“We cannot sit and watch, leaving them to their own struggles and their own fate,” Bush said in remarks prepared for the University of Notre Dame afternoon graduation ceremony.

More than 12 million children live in poverty, Bush told the 2,500 graduates, their teachers and families. He proposed to lead the country into what he called the third stage of combating poverty - after President Johnson’s “war on poverty” and the 1996 welfare overhaul - by marshaling forces of compassion.

He offered rare praise to his predecessor, noting that welfare rolls were cut in half by the 1996 welfare changes:

“Work and self-respect have been returned to many

lives. That is a tribute to the Republicans and Democrats who agreed on reform and to the president who signed it, President Bill Clinton.”

Bush argued for his proposal, which is idling in Congress, to give church-based groups government money for providing social services. And he pressed businesses to open their coffers to such groups as well.

Six of the 10 largest corporate givers currently restrict philanthropic gifts to religious groups, Bush said. “The federal government will not discriminate against faith-based organizations, and neither should corporate America.”

He announced that he would convene a White House summit in the fall, bringing corporate and philanthropic leaders together to discuss ways of assisting both secular and religious community groups.

Quoting a co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, Bush said: “There is no great society which is not a caring society and any effective war on poverty must de-

ploy what Dorothy Day called ‘the weapons of spirit.’”

He tucked into his speech just one nugget of new policy: a promise to include in his budget next year an increase in funds - from \$25 million already proposed for 2002, to \$75 million for 2003 - for low-income home ownership programs such as Habitat for Humanity.

Notre Dame awarded Bush his sixth honorary degree, this one a doctor of laws. In turn, Bush saluted the Catholic university for calling on “all of us, Catholic and non-Catholic, ... to protect life in all its stages.”

The speech - and planned fall summit - were designed to jump-start an initiative that proved surprisingly controversial after Bush launched it in the first days of his presidency.

Civil liberties groups and conservative Christian ministers alike have decried Bush’s plan to open government grants to church-run social service programs. The initiative has since plodded along in the House, where a bill written by Reps. J.C.

Watts Jr., R-Okla., and Tony Hall, D-Ohio, has been given preliminary hearings. In the Senate, however, the bulk of Bush’s proposal has not even been introduced as legislation.

As a presidential candidate last year, Bush offended many Catholics by making a campaign stop at Bob Jones University, a South Carolina school whose leader called the Roman Catholic Church a “Satanic cult” on the school’s Web site.

In the election, the Catholic vote was fairly evenly split between Bush and the Democratic candidate, Al Gore.

Ever since, Bush has assiduously courted Catholic support by meeting with local bishops when he travels outside Washington. He is due to meet Pope John Paul II while in Italy in July.

Bush traveled later Sunday to Yale University, his alma mater, where he addressed graduation ceremonies on Monday.

# Republicans defend Olson nomination

WASHINGTON (AP)—Republicans defended the nomination of Theodore Olson for solicitor general on Sunday, brushing aside Democratic assertions that he misled senators during his confirmation hearings.

“I believe him to be, having known him for over 20 years, very truthful,” former independent counsel Kenneth Starr told ABC’s “This Week.” “So let’s find out any additional facts. I think that the facts will be very supportive of Ted and Ted’s credibility.”

The nomination of Olson, the lawyer who successfully argued the Florida election case in the Supreme Court on behalf of now-President Bush, deadlocked along party lines last week in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

As solicitor general, Olson would be the government’s advocate before the Supreme Court.

Democrats have questioned Olson’s ties with The American Spectator, a conservative magazine that conducted an investigation called the “Arkansas Project” into possible past wrongdoing by then-President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Olson, who was a member of the board of directors of the American Spectator Educational Foundation and represented the magazine, told the committee he was not involved in the Arkansas Project.

Democrats, however, questioned whether Olson was evasive about his connections to that group during his confirmation hearing last month and asked for a bipartisan investigation.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., then pulled Olson’s nomination from committee to try to bring it straight to the Senate floor. Lott predicted Sunday that the nomination would succeed.

“We’re going to try to work through additional requests that have come from the Democrats to look at some additional files and maybe submit some more questions. But in the end, I think that they will be satisfied,” Lott told NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

Sen. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., also predicted Olson would be confirmed. “I am on the Judiciary Committee. He did a fine job before the committee. No one questions his qualifications,” he told CNN’s “Late Edition.”

Sen. John Breaux, D-La., said that if Olson did not answer truthfully, “that would be a prohibitive mistake.”

“I think that more will be done to see whether he truthfully answered. If they show that he has truthfully answered, I would predict that he will be confirmed,” he told “Fox News Sunday.”

# Bush contribution to global AIDS fund assailed

WASHINGTON (IPS)—President George W. Bush announced that Washington will contribute \$200 million to a proposed global fund to fight HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. AIDS and Africa activists immediately denounced the offer as far too little given the magnitude of the problem.

It was the first concrete pledge by a major donor country to the fund, which will be a major topic of debate at next month’s U.N. Special Session on AIDS in New York and at the July summit meeting of the major industrialized countries in Genoa, Italy.

Flanked by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who first proposed such a fund, and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, who hosted a summit about it in Abuja two weeks ago, Bush said the money would be added to existing U.S. assistance to combat infectious diseases.

Annan and others have said the fund will need between seven billion and \$10 billion annually to mount a comprehensive assault on AIDS and other infectious diseases. Bush offered “more (money) to follow as we learn where our support can be most effective. But the fund, he added, “must respect in-

tellectual property rights.”

That condition could signal Washington’s intent to exclude generic drug producers capable of producing anti-AIDS and other drugs more cheaply than the big western pharmaceutical companies. Public health advocates said such an exclusion would make the program more expensive.

Bush also appealed for direct contributions to the proposed fund by private corporations, as well as non-governmental and church groups. The administration reportedly has lobbied Exxon Mobil, Northwest Airlines, and others to pitch in. AIDS and Africa activists rallied just a block from the White House and called for a much larger U.S. contribution.

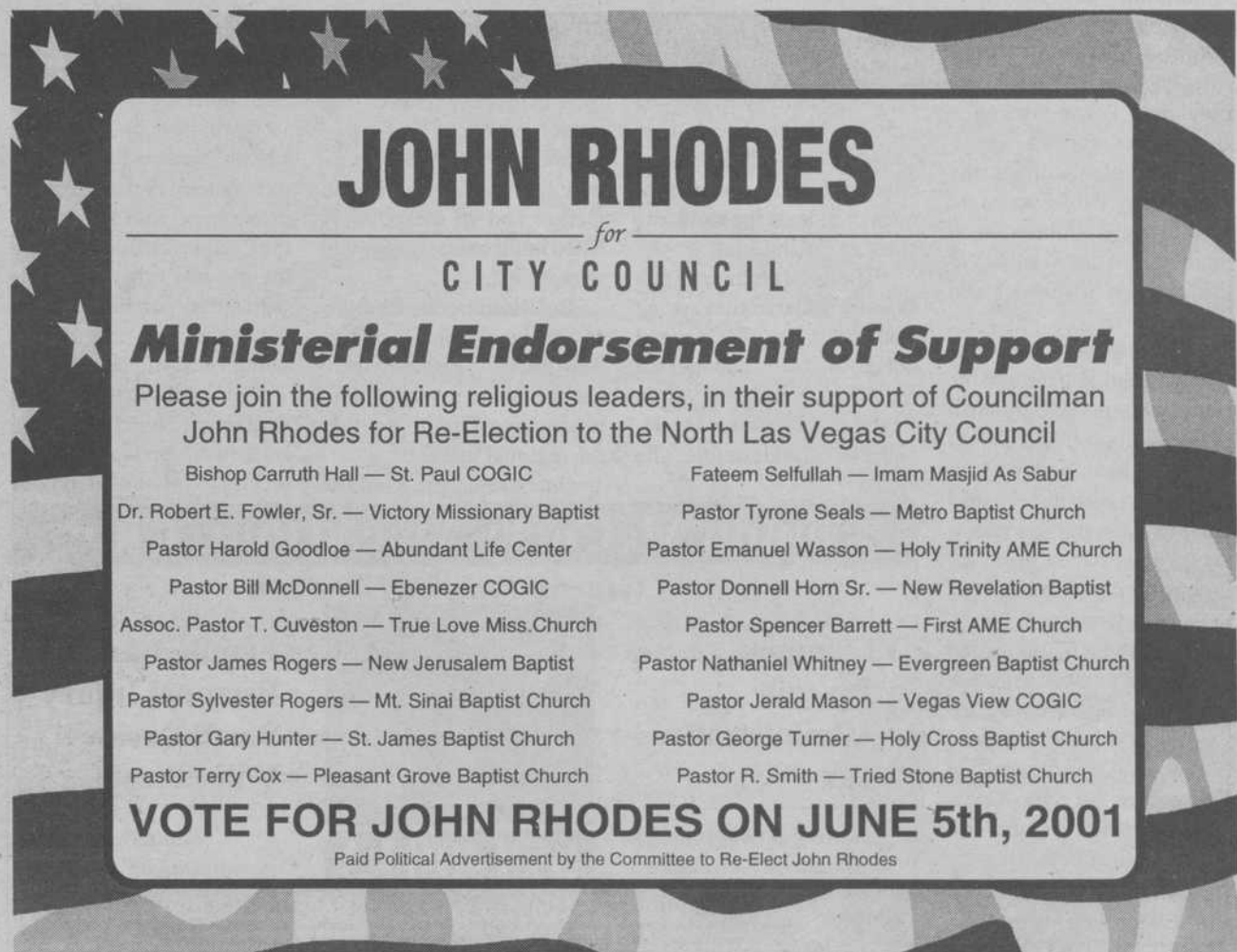
“In the face of what will soon be the worst plague in human history, it’s tragic that the richest country in human history is unwilling to contribute its fair share to finance the solution,” declared Salih Booker, director of Africa Action, a new group created from the merger of three nationally prominent grassroots organizations.

“Underfunding this U.N. initiative means writing off the lives of millions of Africans and others living with HIV and AIDS,” he added.

Other activists agreed.

“The ceremony this morning was a farce,” said Kate Krauss of the anti-AIDS group ACT UP. “It was only designed to give the public the idea that the U.S. is doing something about AIDS in Africa, (but) it’s not going to buy AIDS drugs and it won’t keep anyone from dying.”

Bush’s initiative comes amid growing attention to the AIDS crisis, particularly as it affects sub-Saharan Africa, home to about 70 percent of the estimated 36 million people who are infected with HIV. In some southern African nations, the infection rate exceeds 25 percent.



## JOHN RHODES

for

### CITY COUNCIL

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Pastor James Rogers — New Jerusalem Baptist	Pastor Nathaniel Whitney — Evergreen Baptist Church
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