

Bennett attacks CBC, Kennedy over his gaffe

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Former Secretary of Education William Bennett, widely denounced by liberals and conservatives for his "hypothetical" argument that the crime rate would fall if all Black babies were aborted, has refused to apologize for the remark and has instead attacked the Congressional Black Caucus, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and others who took him to task for a comment even the White House called "not appropriate."

Bennett, who served as secretary of education under Ronald Reagan and drug czar under President George H. W. Bush, created a firestorm Sept. 28 on his syndicated radio program, "Bill Bennett's Morning in America."

Caller: I noticed the na-

tional media, you know, they talk a lot about the loss of revenue, or the inability of the government to fund Social Security, and I was curious, and I've read articles in recent months here, that the abortions that have happened since Roe v. Wade, the lost revenue from the people who have been aborted in the last 30-something years, could fund Social Security as we know it today. And the media just doesn't — never touches this at all.

Bennett: Assuming they're all productive citizens?

Caller: Assuming that they are. Even if only a portion of them were, it would be an enormous amount of revenue.

Bennett: Maybe, maybe, but we don't know what the costs would be, too. I think as — abortions disproportionately occur among single

women? No.

Caller: I don't know the exact statistics, but quite a bit are, yeah.

Bennett: All right, well, I mean, I just don't know. I would not argue for the pro-life position based on this, because you don't know. I mean, it cuts both — you know, one of the arguments in this book "Freakonomics" that they make is that the declining crime rate, you know, they deal with this hypothesis, that one of the reasons crime is down is that abortion is up. Well —

Caller: Well, I don't think that statistic is accurate.

Bennett: Well, I don't think it is either, I don't think it is either, because first of all, there is just too much that you don't know. But I do know that it's true that if you wanted to reduce crime, you could — if that were your sole purpose — you could

abort every Black baby in this country, and your crime rate would go down. That would be an impossible, ridiculous and morally reprehensible thing to do, but your crime rate would go down. So these far-out, these far-reaching, extensive extrapolations are, I think, tricky.

The reaction to Bennett's remarks was swift and searing. "William Bennett's comments smack of such blatant racism and ill regard for all African-Americans that it is incomprehensible in this day and age," said Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League.

Bruce S. Gordon, president and CEO of the NAACP, said: "In 2005, there is no place for the kind of racist statement made by Bennett. While the entire nation is trying to help survivors, Black and White, to re-

cover from the damage caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, it is unconscionable for Bennett to make such ignorant and insensitive comments. I am personally offended and angry that Bennett felt he could make such a public statement with impunity. The owners of the Salem Radio Network, which airs Bennett's program, should also apologize."

Jesse L. Jackson Sr., founder and president of Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, was even more critical.

"Bill Bennett's statement was a morally degenerate statement that had genocide as its logical conclusion," Jackson observed. "His statement comes from a philosophy that Blacks are a problem. It is an ideology of White supremacy. This is classic supremacy, White Neanderthal supremacy."

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California were highly critical of Bennett.

Kennedy issued a three-sentence statement: "Bill Bennett, the author of the 'Book of Virtues' should try reading his own book. Racist comments have no place on the public airways or in civil discourse in this country. He owes an immediate apology to his listeners and the American people."

Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean said, "Bill Bennett's hateful, inflammatory remarks regarding African-Americans are simply inexcusable. Are these the values of the Republican Party and its conservative allies?"

Dean's Republican counterpart, Ken Mehlman characterized Bennett's comments as "regrettable and inappropriate," but added: "What's much worse is the

hypocrisy we've seen from the left."

Interestingly, it is Bennett, the self-appointed virtues czar, who is being criticized for being a hypocrite. He is the author of "The Book of Virtues." In 2003, *Newsweek* magazine and the *Washington Monthly* Online revealed that Bennett was a habitual gambler, losing as much as \$8 million over one period.

After the stories broke, Bennett said, "I adhere to the law. I don't play the 'milk money.' I don't put my family at risk, and I don't owe anyone anything." He pledged to quit gambling.

According to the *Washington Monthly*, Bennett was gambling heavily while criticizing President Clinton for his extramarital affair with Monica Lewinsky. He wrote a book titled, "The Death of Outrage: Bill Clinton and the Assault on American Ideals."

The combative Bennett appeared on Fox News' "Hannity & Colmes" program last Thursday. Without Senator Kennedy's name being raised, Bennett issued a broadside: "I'll not take instructions from Teddy Kennedy. A young woman likely drowned because of his negligence. I'll take no moral instruction from him. That's much worse than legal gambling what Teddy Kennedy did. He should make no judgments at all about people. He shouldn't be in the Senate. As far as racist and all this other stuff, I'll put my record up with Howard Dean, with Harry Reid."

Also, unprompted, he attacked the Congressional Black Caucus:

"Let me tell you, when it comes to abortion, my wife's program, Best Friends, has kept more young women from having abortions because they don't get pregnant because they take her good (See Abortion, Page 12)

Bush insider tapped for Supreme Court

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bush on Monday nominated White House counsel Harriet Miers to replace retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court, reaching into his loyal inner circle for another pick that could reshape the nation's judiciary for years to come.

"She has devoted her life to the rule of law and the cause of justice," Bush said as his first Supreme Court pick, Chief Justice John Roberts, took the bench for the first time just a few blocks from the White House. "She will be an outstanding addition to the Supreme Court of the United States."

If confirmed by the Republican-controlled Senate, Miers, 60, would join Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as the second woman on the nation's highest court and the third to serve there. Miers, who has never been a judge, was the first woman to serve as president of the Texas State Bar and the Dallas Bar Association.

Miers, whom Bush called a trailblazer for women in the



HARRIET MIERS

legal profession, said she was humbled by the nod.

"If confirmed, I recognize I will have a tremendous responsibility to keep our judicial system strong and to help insure the court meets their obligations to strictly apply the laws and Constitution," she said.

Democratic and Republican special interests groups had been braced for a political brawl over the pick, but they may not get it. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., had urged the president to consider Miers, according to several officials familiar with Bush's consultations with Congress.

Miers has no judicial

record, which may complicate any Democratic attempts to block her nomination. It is impossible to predict whether Miers and Roberts will shift the court to the right. She would replace O'Connor, a critical swing vote on the court who helped uphold the right to abortion and affirmative action. Rehnquist, the late chief justice being replaced by Roberts, was a consistent conservative vote.

"We know even less about Harriet Miers than we did about John Roberts and because this is the critical swing seat on the court, Americans will need to know a lot more about Mier's judicial philosophy and legal background before any vote for confirmation," said Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., said:

"With this selection, the president has chosen another outstanding nominee to sit on our nation's highest court. Ms. Miers is honest and hard working and understands the importance of judicial restraint and the limited role of a judge to interpret the law and not legislate from the bench."

Bush, his approval rating falling in recent months, had been under intense pressure to nominate a woman or a minority.

Miers had helped push Roberts' nomination through the Senate, and Bush said that "she will strictly interpret our Constitution and laws. She will not legislate from the bench." Conservatives apparently agreed.

Initial reaction from conservatives was positive.

"She has been a forceful advocate of conservative legal principles and judicial re- (See Nominee, Page 13)

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