The Christian Right’s Influence on American Politics

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Introduction

As one of the most widespread social movements of the past forty years, the Christian Right has attempted to permeate American politics with a conservative political agenda. Established to transform American politics, the Christian Right designed their social movement to penetrate the political realm and influence the hearts and minds of American citizens. The Christian Right has transformed its social movement on multiple occasions to implement their agenda on the local, state, and national levels. Though the initial stages of development may have been unstable, the Christian Right has gained support to become one of the most viable and visible social movements of the past forty years.

On the surface, the Christian Right has broadly impacted American Politics. As various Christian Right organizations developed, such as the Christian Coalition, support flourished across the country. Since Christian Right activists mainly focus their attention on moral public policy issues, supporters have tended to influence public policies based on morality including abortion, homosexuality, and education. To gain momentum, the Christian Right has successfully endorsed conservative politicians on the national, state, and local levels. Supporting conservative candidates has allowed the Christian Right to permeate politics in hopes of effecting public policy.

Though the Christian Right has made tremendous strides to become a major political player, they have yet to significantly transform American politics. By examining the Christian Right beyond the surface, it is clear that their impact has not been as substantial as it may appear. For instance, the Christian Right has fought endlessly to create laws prohibiting abortion. Though the Christian Right has prevented a
number of abortions by protesting, they have yet to overturn Roe v. Wade. Local and national rallies may draw thousands, yet their actual impact is quite insignificant in comparison to their efforts. In addition to abortion, the Christian Right has also attempted to influence the public school system. In hopes of instituting school prayer and abstinence only programs, the Christian Right has fought endlessly but to no avail. By closely examining the Christian Right beyond their façade, it is argued that their impact is not as great as it may appear.

One cannot assume that the Christian Right has significantly impacted American politics solely based on their number of supporters or various attempts to overturn public policies. Rather, the Christian Right must be analyzed on much deeper level. This thesis will examine the extent to which the Christian Right has influenced American politics. As other political movements, the Christian Right seeks to permeate the political realm through elections, public policy and public opinion. Examining certain aspects of the Christian Right’s core political agenda will illuminate just how influential the Christian Right has been over the past forty years.

Understanding the extent to which the Christian Right has influenced American politics on the local, state and national levels is significant because of their ability to rise against opposition and overcome defeat. Their tactics, motives, and organization have transformed time and time again as electoral politics, public policy and public opinion shifts. Their role as a social movement based on religious doctrines provides an interesting outlook to the ways in which religion plays a role in politics. Examining past and present Christian Right organizations is necessary in order to understand its waxing and waning pattern as an influential social movement within American politics. Forty
years of broad successes and hurtful defeats have clearly impacted the Christian Right’s influence over American politics, and the extent to which they have significant changed American politics is debated.

The Development of the Christian Right

The origins of Protestantism in the United States can be traced back to the earliest American colonies. The Act of Toleration, passed in 1649, permitted the religious toleration of anyone who believed in Jesus Christ. As individuals identified themselves within certain religious sects, Calvinists of the Great Awakening in the 1730s generated an intertwining of politics and religion. “Deism had become a prominent religious attitude among many intellectuals and upper-class Americans” (Utter and True, 4) including the writers of the Constitution and the first politicians of the new country. Current scholars who deem that the Christian Right’s main goal is to return the country to its original roots bases their claims on the assumption that the founding fathers created American as a Christian nation based on scripture and traditional ideas. Regardless of religious affiliation, the founding fathers “generally agreed that morality was crucial to the success of republican politics and that organized religion was necessary, or at least helpful, in the development of an appropriate morality for the nation” (Utter and True, 5). As the United States expanded, colonies began to develop churches and base law on religious doctrines.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, multiple other Christian sects besides Protestantism developed. Additionally, evangelical Christians attempted to influence politics by proposing certain laws based on their Christian traditions. Evangelical Christians is a “term used to refer to a religious movement, to specific
dominations, and to religious doctrine" who “believe in the importance of personal salvation through Jesus Christ, usually through a born-again experience, in the inerrancy of the Bible, and in the importance of spreading the gospel (Wilcox, 2006: 193). For example, Evangelical Christians fought to nationally declare every Sunday as the official day of Sabbath. Though this particular effort failed, evangelicals continued to rally in the North and South under the name of God. “Northern Protestants’ preference for Republican economic policies, and an image of the Republican party as the party of morality” (Utter and True, 9) formed the foundations of the deep historical connection the Christian Right currently shares with the Republican Party. From the later nineteenth century to today, evangelical Christians have sought to infiltrate American politics according to their moral ideologies.

Throughout the mid 1900s, Christian Right activism began to increase in response to Supreme Court rulings that knocked down their moral beliefs. The Scopes trial of 1925 focused public attention to evangelicals further prompting their involvement in state and local politics. Though evangelicals may not have been successful, “direct challenges to the moral beliefs of evangelicals ultimately contributed to their political activism at the national level” (Utter and True, 14). The prohibition of prayer in public schools as a result of Engel v. Vitale in 1962 and the legalizing of abortion as a result of Roe v. Wade in 1973 were the two crucial events that motivated the Christian Right to infiltrate the political realm more than ever before (Utter and True, 16). The earliest success of the Christian Right was their ability to mobilize a strong foundation in order to object to liberal minded politicians who disapproved of traditional values. However, the Christian
Right was not yet fully organized or politically skilled enough to make a substantial impact on American politics.

The establishment of the Moral Majority and other separate nationally recognized, but united, organizations, elevated the Christian Right as a predominant social movement in 1979. To spur increased participation, the Christian Right focused on increasing the number of voters who ideologically aligned themselves with Christian morals in addition to supporting conservative Republican politicians and candidates. This was necessary if the Christian Right wanted to create a strong front to overturn past Supreme Court cases that diminished the role of Christianity in American life. These initiatives illustrate how the Christian Right planned “to penetrate the grass roots, and to shape the narrower congressional and broader political agendas” (Moen, 9). Separate, yet still united under the same political agenda, the first four Christian Right politically activist organizations consisted of National Christian Action Coalition, the Religious Roundtable, Christian Voice and the Moral Majority. Of the initial organizations, the most influential was the Moral Majority, led by Reverend Jerry Falwell.

Founded in order to lobby congressmen regarding social issues, the Moral Majority was not able to convince and apply their agenda as hoped. The Moral Majority experienced “mixed success: the social issues were placed on the congressional agenda and some victories were achieved, but the key-call votes on the major objectives were lost,” further damaging relations between lobbyists and congressmen (Moen, 21). Additionally, primarily using direct mail to gain supporters and donations diminished funds quickly. Its demise in 1986 spurred negative sentiments against the Christian Right movement throughout the country because of “willing[ness] to jeopardize its long-term
stability in order to spur religious conservatives into politics” (Moen, 23). Quickly running low on funds, the Moral Majority was too weak enough to revive itself. As a result, Christian Right organizations of the late 1980s were forced to adopt a new strategy to implement its political agenda across the country.

Christian Right activism quickly found its place in American politics during the 1980s as they had the support of President Reagan’s administration. The American Freedom Coalition, led by the founder of Christian Voice, quickly progressed drawing on a “grassroots emphasis” in addition to finding methods of activism that highlighted “a secular rather than a religious orientation” (Moen, 33, 49). However, the American Freedom Coalition dissolved in 1992 into yet another organization because of an inability to gain support from other religious groups and political activists. The renaming and restructuring of Christian Right activist organization is universally known as the “kaleidoscope pattern.” This shifting ability has allowed the Christian Right to maintain its stability as “a marginal political player at the national level” but also elevate their “significant presence in select states and locales” (Moen, 52). The waxing and waning of the Christian Right, since the deterioration of the American Freedom Coalition, surprisingly followed the pattern he described more than a decade ago. Though the Christian Right was slowly developing a strong network of linked organizations to lobby congress and influence the hearts and minds of Americans, they had yet to significantly impact any piece of national or state legislation that promoted their political agenda.

New Christian Right organizations of the late 1980s began to infiltrate the political arena by gaining the support of conservative politicians. Christian organizations began to scheme methods in order to infiltrate the Republican Party within each
individual state and “managed to successfully integrate its agenda into party politics at the national, state and local levels” proving their ability to influence the electoral process (Fetner, 65). By aligning with the Republican Party, the Christian Right finally made significant progress, as the 1980s was a decade of electoral progress for the Christian Right. Robertson’s efforts expanded with the establishment of the Freedom Council in 1991. “A nonprofit group designed to educate voters about conservative Christian issues” through “grassroots support,” the Freedom Council allowed Robertson to develop the support base necessary to launch his political career as a Christian Right activist (Fetner, 68). Seeking leaders within states, Robertson used state politicians to infiltrate state governments in hopes of gaining his own momentum for the upcoming 1988 presidential elections. Though the organization fell apart in 1986, the Freedom Council allowed Reed to establish his roots as a conservative Christian activist as well as create networks within the political sphere. Previous members of the Freedom Council “voted their members into leadership positions precinct by precinct” (Fetner, 69), allowing the Christian Right’s slow trickle into smaller communities.

Pat Robertson’s presidential nomination reinvigorated the Christian movement once again in 1987. Using television and an “invisible army...organized in precincts across America” as a means to spread his campaign, Robertson promoted his conservative views, which prompted Christians to become politically involved once again (Moen, 113). Though Robertson lost the presidential nomination by a landslide in 1987, his campaign provided many Christian Right leaders with the political skills and experience necessary in order to regain momentum after the failure of the Moral Majority.
Seeking Christians who would vote for conservative Republican candidates, Robertson established the Christian Coalition in 1989 using the funds he had raised during the presidential campaign. Robertson was able to gain enough supporters at the local levels to influence these elections, in order to build his army in order to start campaigning for state and then federal government positions. "Now that the religious right had a significant foot in the door of the GOP, the Christian Coalition marched forward with its plan for a major realignment of the Republican Party" as the Christian Right was slowly gaining momentum within the political arena while also maintaining a low key façade (Fetner, 70).

It was also at that time when Ralph Reed, the executive director of the organization, strategically "made a conscious effort to build its state and county chapters around political activists, not preachers, in order to attract members" shifting the Christian Right's tactics, mainly rhetoric, from a morally based to a politically based" (Wilcox 2006, 47). The Christian Right had finally found a technique to convey their political agenda in a manner that groups beside Christians could identify with and hold as their own. "Efforts to influence policy were more scaled back...both in terms of policy and scope and scale" resulting in "efforts [that] addressed fewer issues and focused primarily on local and state politics rather than those at the federal level" (Fetner, 67).

By infiltrating state politics, the Christian Coalition established networks across the country within state governments. Using grassroots politics, the Christian Coalition also attracted public interest, only further feeding their efforts to overtake the Republican Party and overturn legislation the organization disproved.
Reed defined stealth candidates as those who did not publicly claim to be connected with the Christian Coalition, yet worked covertly alongside them in order to promote Christian values. Reed’s legendary stealth approach did not meet the approval of all Christians and many who were elected using these tactics were not reelected for second or third terms, as their deceptiveness did not meet the public’s standards. Some supporters felt as though hiding their true moral sentiments were misleading and would not attract the diverse audience that would be necessary to overcome the country’s strong liberal mentality. Launching the Christian Right as a social movement began at the local level where organizations could easily promote their political agenda through town conferences, letters, phone calls, and sidewalk protests. Working as umbrella organizations under national organizations, local activist groups worked as a “network” to “serve as a valuable recruiting mechanism for the Christian Right” (Wilcox 2006, 49). The Christian Coalition’s ability to attract support across the country was one of the Christian Right’s earliest successes. Without developing a strong foundation of skilled and organized politicians through localized efforts, the Christian Right would not have survived.

The Christian Right experienced some of its earliest legislative victories during the 98th Congress. Between 1983 – 1984, the Christian Right used President Reagan’s support to boost the discussion of social issues within Congress. One of the Christian Right’s earliest successes on Capital Hill came with the passing of “equal access,” a law that permitted religious organizations at schools to have the same rights and opportunities as non-religiously affiliated groups (Moen, 96). This victory later led to the Christian Right’s successful passing of the Equal Access Act in 1990. In addition to this particular
legislation, the Christian Right also successfully abolished the Equal Rights Amendment and prevented federal funding of abortions across the country. Additionally, and most importantly, the Christian Right “helped gain floor consideration of school-prayer and abortion constitutional amendments,” which had not been readdressed since the mid-1990s (Moen, 96). Though the Christian Right did open avenues of discussion, they were unable to pass legislations that fed their political agenda, as many felt social public policies were “no-win issues” (Moen, 97). Raising such issues may have reintroduced moral issues to the political sphere, yet the Christian Right’s victories were not substantial enough to promote their extensive political agenda to the extent they hoped.

In conjunction with their failed attempts at proposing legislation, the Christian Coalition quickly experienced two bouts of defeat, impeding their efforts to influence legislation and public attitudes. Ralph Reed left the Christian Coalition in the late 1990s, leaving Robertson to decide the organization’s political route (Wilcox 2006, 50). Not only did Reed’s resignation affect the political course of the Christian Coalition, but Christian Right political actors also resigned at the national, state and local levels. The Christian Right’s separation from other political activist groups exhibited their strong desire to affect American politics in a manner to which many strongly objected. Nonetheless, resistance only pushed the Christian Right forward, prompting the establishment of more politically active organizations in favor of Christian values.

Much of the Christian Right’s success can be attributed to the efforts of Ralph Reed. Witnessing the mishaps of the 1980s with the fall of the Moral Majority, Reed reestablished the Christian Right and its tactics by shifting “focus on local politics and local issues...building a formidable network of grassroots activists” who developed
outreach programs to promote their morally based political plan (Reed, 7). Additionally, it may appear that the 1992 conservative defeat would sever the ties between the Christian Right and politics. Yet, Ralph Reed was adamant that "focus on local issues came phenomenal success...one of the most extensive grassroots networks in American politics" leading to congressional domination a few years later (Reed, 153). The Christian Coalition experienced success in 1994 when the Republicans regained control of Congress after forty years. Utilizing bonds with the Republican Party, the Christian Right sought to reemphasize the importance of religion within government. By emphasizing their alignment with the Republican Party, the Christian Right solidified bonds with established politicians who supported Christian values.

Though there were numerous detrimental events that hurt the progress of the Christian Right, President Bush’s Christian rhetoric throughout his two presidential terms reinvigorated the movement a third time. "Bush campaigned hard for the Christian Right vote, and ultimately it was critical to his primary election victory," illustrating the significant of the Christian Right’s ability to reassemble their main activists and work within their local, state and national organizations to endorse a candidate who promoted their political agenda (Wilcox 2006, 97). To attract support and maintain connections within government, the Christian Right was forced to revise their strategy multiple times throughout their development in order to survive. To promote their values agenda while maintaining neutrality with liberals, the Christian Right shifted their rhetoric to incorporate a broader audience. Removing preachers as the decision makers within Christian Right organizations, the movement was able to shift their attention and methods to an audience that would help to strengthen and enhance the overall political agenda.
"Accompanying the panoply of changes in the Christian Right was a noticeable rise in levels of political sophistication and skill" which allowed organizations to establish bonds to spread the overall agenda (Moen, 156). Currently, the Christian Right includes various national, state and local organizations that promote a Christian based values agenda.

Christian Right organizations make use of multiple sources of outreach to promote awareness and influence legislation and public attitudes through action alerts used to lobby members at the highest levels of government, mostly within Congress. During the uprising of the Christian Right as a social and political movement, certain issues have sparked particular interest within their overarching values agenda. Within the overarching political agenda of most Christian Right organizations, "the greatest concern to evangelicals includes support for the pro-life position on the abortion question, the teaching of creationism (or at least intelligent design)...and opposition to...the gay rights movement" (Utter and True, 31). The Christian Right has held a prominent role in American Politics for the past four decades and still strives to affect national, state and local politics. By strategizing their moral agenda into secular rhetoric within the public and political spheres in addition to grassroots lobbying, the Christian Right learned from their mistakes by taking into consideration new methods of activism leading to small, but substantial, successes on the national level such as the passing of the Equal Access Act in 1990, and greater accomplishments on the state and local levels such as the infiltration of Christian Right school boards members. It is unknown what the future holds for the social movement, yet past efforts cannot be overlooked and their ability to rise after defeat exhibits strength and a strong commitment to their fundamental Christian beliefs.
Scholars who have analyzed the Christian Right are divided among three schools regarding the movement’s influence in American Politics. The first addresses pure success due to the Christian Right’s ability to influence the policy making process, especially on the state level. The second addresses the failure of the Christian Right since national policies continue to be liberally based. The third believes that the Christian Right has been partially successful in terms of their impact on citizens and local and state elections, yet not necessarily at the national level.

**Pure Success**

Patrick Hynes documents the Christian Right’s influence in America to further validate the significance of the Christian Right, also known as the Religious Right. In *Defense of the Religious Right*, Hynes attempts to disprove the myths that are associated with the Christian Right in order to prove their power as a political and religious movement. Hynes rejects the theory that the Christian Right has led to the current polarization of conservatives and liberals in America. Issues such as abortion, stem-cell research, evolution, and homosexuality are some of the Christian Right’s fundamental issues that spark immediate interest among all Americans. Instead, he cites scholar Alan Wolfe and agrees that the Christian Right is “part of the mainstream culture, not dissenters from it” (Hynes, 199). Hynes argues that the secular media is to blame for the country’s misunderstanding of the Religious Right and their motives. He argues that whether or not the secular left attacks the Religious Right on its cultural or theological beliefs, the Religious Right will not fade, but rather continue to follow their political agenda than subject themselves to what it sees as secular culture. By disproving myths
commonly associated with the Christian Right, Hynes attempts to paint the social movement as a political group that has experienced a number of let downs yet still maintains their viability by conforming to the more liberal mentality of the majority, especially through language, in order to attract supporters not affiliated with Christianity.

Examining a specific political issue of the Christian Right’s overall agenda, John A. Shields recent book, *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right*, concentrates on the belief that Christian Right activists use deliberative norms to influence public opinion. By engaging those who do not necessarily align with Christian Right morals, Shields argues that opening discussion can lead to a change of public opinion. He argues that the Christian Right has substantially strengthened democracy. As a case study, Shields focuses on the Christian Right’s efforts to reform abortion policy through grassroots mobilization. However, the problem the Christian Right faces is that “they must excite and sustain the moral convictions of citizens to build an activist base” as well as “discipline and educate the passions of mobilized activists because they practice public advocacy” (Shields, 46). He emphasizes that the Christian Right has positively strengthened democracy.

Even though their ultimate goal may be to convert everyone to pro-life supporters, the Christian Right uses deliberative practices, such as student volunteers who are trained to engage others in conversations, in order to prove their case. Shields commends the Christian Right’s efforts while his opponents are worried that the use of moral issues are negatively affecting the role of deliberative practices because of their desire to use its specific political agenda to influence public policies. Ultimately, Shields suggests that the Christian Right has not hurt the current culture war, but instead has used “moral
conflict...to invigorate American public life” (Shields, 153). The Christian Right has been able to increase their number of supporters who do, or do not, identify as Christians by appealing to constituents who are also concerned about moral issues, enhancing American democracy. Shields claims that enhancing public debate through increased levels of supporters, as the Christian Right has successfully accomplished, has reinvigorated American democracy.

Anna Greenberg recognizes the benefits of the Christian Right’s decision to align their organizations with the Republican Party since they are the political group known to push for policies that reflect comparable value agendas. In her piece Religion, Politics, and a Changing America, Greenberg suggests that the impact of Christian voters has hindered Democrats from acknowledging their own religions during campaigns and has increased the country’s dispute over gay rights, abortion, and sex education. Greenberg suggests that as religion becomes a more predominant factor of public policy in this country, the secular Democratic voters are not fully realizing the salience of religion in the political sphere. The Republican Party has succeeded through their values agenda illustrated by historical and current achievements, including several civil rights movements.

The Christian Right, aligned with the Republican Party, has taken advantage of Democratic failures by raising the issue of religion in the political sphere. Since “religiosity has been associated more strongly with Republicans than with Democrats for a number of election cycles,” the Christian Right has sought to use this trait to their advantage (Greenberg, 116). Greenberg draws her conclusion based on findings of the Pew Research Center, which found that over 80% of Americans believe in God and
prayer (116). According to Greenberg the Christian Right can politically influence American politics by focusing “around the so-called values agenda” since Republicans and Democrats vary greatly on views (117). Since Republicans are held to be the more religiously affiliated political party and their stronghold on the religious realm is not likely to fade anytime soon, the Christian Right can take advantage of the established norms and work within the system to promote their own ideology rather than creating a new political outlet from scratch.

Mark J. Rozell claims that the Christian Right has not faded whatsoever in the political arena and “remains an active and powerful force in U.S. politics” (72). In his article *The Christian Right in the GOP Campaign*, Rozell uses the competition between Bush and McCain to develop his argument. Before the 2000 election, it was believed that the “Christian Right was a minimal player in the GOP’s presidential candidate selection process” (Rozell, 57). The Christian Right, he argues, is motivated by their own political agenda and will therefore align themselves with the candidate that best suits their needs and desires. He claims that McCain was not able to win the votes of Christian Right members because the group’s leaders’ first priority is “protecting their own power” (Rozell, 70). Claiming that the Christian Right was the deciding factor between Bush and McCain, Rozell emphasizes that even though many may oppose the idea that the Christian Right has political power, they were “the kingmakers in the GOP contest” of 2000 and will continue to advance in the future” (Rozell, 59). Republican support divided moderates who supported McCain and the Christian Right who endorsed Bush. Though McCain may have initially led, “Bush showed his greatest strength among Christian social conservatives” paving the way to his eventual success (Rozell, 60).
McCain's position to reform campaign finance also contributed to his lack of Christian endorsement, which also led to his eventual defeat.

Additionally, Rozell identifies other reasons why the Christian Right benefited Bush over McCain. The major Christian Right organizations tried to spoil McCain's campaign, especially in South Carolina. Claiming that McCain was not conservative enough based on his methods of rhetoric, support of scientific research that used embryonic cells, and support of Roe v. Wade, the Christian Right started an "attack on his credibility as an advocate of the social conservative cause" (Rozell, 61). In addition to defeats in Virginia and Michigan, McCain unleashed fury against the Christian Right prompting Christian organizations to rally against McCain and even more so for Bush. Though "Christian Right opposition to McCain was more personal than political in nature," their efforts to support Bush because of his commitment to the Christian faith illustrates the extent to which the Christian Right wished to see their political agenda come to life within the political sphere (Rozell, 62).

Chip Berlet espouses that the conservatives invested enough time and money to spark interest among conservative Christians in The New Political Right in the United States. Berlet alleges that the Christian Right had successfully "finished the task of asserting control over all three branches of government" by 2000 (71). Highlighting the 1980s as a decade of Christian Right influence on the Republican Party, the Christian Right may not have held significant strongholds in each branch of government. Yet, they illuminated their presence nonetheless by proposing legislation, lobbying the judiciary, and fighting to maintain executive power. The Christian Right's widespread network of conservatives has spawned various organizations that continue to influence all three
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branches today, even if their success waxes and wanes throughout the years. His conclusion supports the idea that the Christian Right is a "social movement built around a set of shared theologically and moral beliefs mobilized in support of the Republican Party" (90). Berlet suggests that the Christian Right has maintained a stronghold on their alignment with the Republican Party since the early 1980s showing "that they played a major role in shaping domestic and foreign policies" (89) by using their value based agenda to gain supporters.

Specifically, Berlet draws upon Jean V. Hardisty’s claim in Mobilizing Resentment, which identifies five reasons as to why the Christian Right is a successful social movement. First, the Christian Right has developed an intertwined network of supporters through organizations and institutions that identify with a strict conservative mentality. Second, the Christian Right was able to prompt a "religious revitalization and apocalyptic fervor" among evangelicals. Third, the Christian Right emphasized how supporting their political agenda would provide future economic stability. Fourth, the Christian Right manipulated their rhetoric and fifth, they fought against the growing liberal mentality of the mid 1900s. "The political Right consciously recruits young activists into a social movement" in order to "groom the most promising for a career as social movement professionals" suggesting that the Christian Right not only sought to infiltrate the political realm, but also the hearts and minds of American citizens (Berlet, 90-1).

Pure Failure

As America transformed politically since the early 1990s, the Christian Right increased its ability to mobilize through grassroots organizations. Because of this ability
to activate its constituency from the bottom up, scholar David Frum questions why the Christian Right has not been more successful with its “emphasis on emotion rather than doctrine” in his book entitled *What’s Right? The New Conservative Majority and the Remaking of America* (82). Frum argues that the Christian Right has rarely influenced local politics – for example by winning school board seats – and therefore cannot construct a strong enough base to create its own national leaders. Frum emphasizes that when Christian Right candidates or those supported by the Christian Right are thrown into national elections, “they got clobbered” (79). In terms of direct and indirect accomplishments, Frum explains that the Christian Right has lost time and time again. He suggests five areas of national politics that are at the forefront of many American’s political agenda. These, he says, prove the failure of the Christian Right, including the present separation of church and state, secular education in public schools, free speech in terms of obscene language or behavior, the endurance of Roe v. Wade, and the continuing evolution of gay rights. Frum attests that the Christian Right may affect public opinion by gaining it politicians with similar ideologies, yet it has no way of transforming the public policies that must be created through a network of people, procedures, and problems. Frum believes that the Christian Right has failed at pursuing their political agenda because they do not have the skills necessary to influence the policy making process. Therefore, they must rely on secular politicians who have similar morally based ideologies that only somewhat parallel their own, such as Ronald Regan.

*Mixed Success*

Three of the most predominant scholars who have examined the Christian Right’s political significance are John C. Green, Clyde C. Wilcox, and Mark J. Rozell. Through
a series of books and articles, they have analyzed whether or not the Christian Right has made a significant impact on the state and national level in regards to their ability to influence moral policies. Their research has primarily focused on abortion, homosexual marriages, and education. The first of the series was published in 1995, *God at the Grassroots*, and examined the 1994 election. It was followed by a revised 1997 publication, *God at the Grassroots, 1996*, which examined the 1996 election, then *Prayers in the Precincts*, which analyzed the 1998 election, *The Christian Right in American Politics, Marching to the Millennium* in 2003 and most recently *The Values Campaign* in 2006 that examined the Bush’s reelection as president. This series studies the Christian Right’s individual contributions to elections at the local and state levels as well as how that transfers to the national level. Their compilation of works suggests, as a whole, that the Christian Right is an influential force at the state level through the examination of campaign and policy efforts within specific states that yielded both success and defeat. Yet, they are only occasionally successful in national elections. They examine the Christian Right’s political agenda, tactics, and relationship with the Republican Party to explain its movement’s desire to influence politics.

South Carolina is one example the series follows to show how the Christian Right has been only marginally successful. The 2004 primary presidential elections “confirmed again that candidates who depend primarily on Christian conservatives...were unlikely to win statewideGOP nomination” (Guth, 254). Candidates who align themselves with the Christian Right are not able to follow through when campaigning because of moral restrictions in regards to social issues, such as abortion and homosexuality. Guth also suggests that Christian Right supporters within the legislature branch do not necessary
have the ability to affect public policy, such as South Carolina’s prohibition of tax cuts for religious schools (Guth, 255).

Michigan has also experienced Christian Right activism to a great extent, yet has extended its successes to the national level. Because the Christian Right has maintained a viable organized network in Michigan, they have seen great success in regards to alignment with conservative candidates, connection with national politics figures such as President Reagan and Pat Robertson, as well as their secular, but religiously toned, rhetoric. Though these benefits may help the Christian Right grow as a social movement, “the Christian Right in Michigan is far from all-powerful” because of internal disorganization and lack of communication (Penning and Smidt, 122). Additionally, the Christian Right in Michigan is relatively new, and thus does not have the skills necessary to promote a strong enough campaign to successfully pursue their political agenda nationally. Lastly, Pennington and Smidt argue that there the Christian Right is constantly inundated with counter movements showing that the Christian Right may be “powerful but not dominant in state politics” (123). Therefore, Michigan is a prime example of the strength of the Christian Right but yet their inability to follow through on a larger scale.

John C. Green has published influential articles in addition to his collaborative works. Green suggests that there is a strong relationship between the Christian Right and the Republican Party, which has led to the Christian Right’s overall success. Green followed Christian Right efforts to influence presidential elections within specific states to analyze the ways in which the Christian Right influenced the election outcomes. He suggests that the Christian Right has contributed to the political divide in the country.
more widely known as the culture war. Though funding and mass support has propelled
the Christian Right in the past, especially concerning abortion and gay marriage to a
certain extent, Green is hesitant to argue that the Christian Right will be able to maintain
their ability to mobilize in order to create public policy based on their traditionalist
beliefs.

For instance, same-sex marriage became one of the most controversial issues of
the 2004 presidential election. Specifically, Christian Right activists highlighted the
issue in states that favored Bush’s reelection, such as Ohio where the Christian Right
used grassroots tactics to infiltrate American homes. “Republicans used the issue as a
subtle values cue, counting on the perception among more religious voters that the GOP
was the party of religious values” (Wilcox, Merolla, and Beer, 66). The issue of same-
sex marriage allowed the Christian Right to penetrate American politics by aligning with
Republicans, such as President Bush, who supported their traditionalist values and sought
their endorsement to win elections. However, engaging with such a debated social issue
did help Bush’s campaign as 16% of Democrats, 57% of Independents and 96% of
Republicans supported the Ohio amendment to prohibit gay-marriage according to Ohio
exit polls (Wilcox, Merolla, and Beer, Table 3.1, 69).

Though the Christian Right has previously endorsed conservative Republicans,
Green demonstrates that officials do not necessarily transform or influence public policy.
In Faith-Based Politics in American Presidential Elections, Green suggests that elections
“depend on the actual performance of religious groups ...within the structure of
contemporary faith-based politics” (221). Green explains that religious groups, such as
the Christian Right, use their personal beliefs to sway supporters and their votes. The
Christian Right has had great success in the past, especially President Bush's two victories, to gain a sort of alliance with the Republican Party. Bush's political agenda aligned with the Christian Right in terms of "displacing economic issues (social welfare programs) with cultural issues (faith-based social services and accountability in public education)" (Green, 66). Bush's emphasis on moral social issues not only highlighted, but also and amplified years of exertion by the Christian Right to bring social issues to the forefront of American politics. Since a significant number of voters were part of the Christian Right, the Republicans felt it was their responsibility to give their constituents the policies they longed for, regardless of their extreme nature. By identifying that the Christian Right needs to align itself with such a strong party, Green suggests that that religion will continue to play an important role in American politics. However, he does not necessarily believe that their contribution will continue to show promising results since there are other religious, cultural and political factors involved.

Clyde Wilcox identifies the significant features of Christian Right activism through their mobilization of Christian leaders within national and local organizations in his best-known work, *Onward Christian Soldiers*. Wilcox shows that the Republican Party's alignment with the Christian Right benefited both groups based on a similar set of beliefs. He espouses that the Christian Right has only been successful within the political arena. The Christian Right created the most significant foundations to support the Republican Party and impact state and federal leaders in accordance with its agenda in the early late 1980s and early 1990s. Particularly, since the development of the Christian Coalition in the late 1980s, the Christian Right has sought to "influence Republican nominations and perhaps to control the party apparatus, to help the Republicans win back
the White House and retain their majorities in Congress, to achieve legislative victories in Congress and state legislatures, to influence decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court, to win control of school boards in order to influence school curricula, and to win referenda in states and counties to implement parts of its agenda” (Wilcox, 2006, 69). Wilcox suggests the most influential aspect of their grassroots campaign stemmed from Ralph Reed, the founder of the Christian Coalition. Smaller organizations within each state would affiliate themselves with one of the larger, national Christian Right organizations in order to reach more potential followers. Influencing people on a local, small scale led to a widespread effect – especially, as Wilcox suggests, with its use of the Internet as a means of outreach.

Wilcox believes that the Christian Right has been an effective social movement as they “not only can be a major player in nominations but can even dominate the process, for a determined voter mobilization campaign can swamp the opposition” (Wilcox 2006, 89). Wilcox specifically highlights the Christian Right’s role in presidential elections. Specifically, he highlights that because the Christian Right does have power on the state level, the movement has many sources to depend upon. However, Wilcox does admit that the past has shown minimal success on the national level, such as Pat Robertson’s loss in 1988.

As a social movement, the Christian Right “has paradoxically been the most successful social movement in influencing elections and party politics over the last century and the least successful in influencing policy and culture” (Wilcox 2006, 182). Wilcox draws this claim based upon the notion that the Christian Right do not face any sort of discrimination and can therefore influence all types of people, including
government officials. Without such a limitation, the Christian Right push their traditional values on others abrasively, which hurts their ability to influence the general public. For example, the Christian Right “have been more interested in creating their own parallel cultural outlets” such as with television in order to influence popular culture (Wilcox 2006, 183). Though the Christian Right may face opposition by other social groups, they have continued to reform their structure to attract a greater audience both within the political and public spheres. The Christian Right developed extensively during the 1900s allowing them to become “a far more sophisticated movement that pursues a variety of strategies to achieve a variety of goals” (Wilcox 2006, 69). Wilcox believes that the Christian Right has been effective because of their continual transformation and desire to influence all aspects of political life, from legislation to political attitudes.

The Christian Right’s grassroots efforts translated into potential votes for candidates with the same ideological beliefs, especially on moral public policy issues. Wilcox suggests that the Christian Right has gained power in certain states as a result of their ability to manipulate the rules of electoral politics in their favor by choosing to place more emphasis in states with certain political practices. In terms of electoral success, Wilcox debates that the Christian Right would have had less success if there were a statewide primary election rather than a statewide convention. He suggests that because conventions are more time consuming than primaries, ”the Christian Right can win because its activists are more likely to make the extra effort to participate than are party moderates” (Wilcox 2006, 90). Since most conventions take place in red states, the Christian Right’s impact is undeniably significant. Their success on a state level sometimes translates to the national elections, such as the presidential elections of 2000
and 2004. Yet, on the whole, it is rare for conservative candidates to succeed at the national level even if he or she may win the state election simply because of moderate and Democratic resistance. For these reasons, the Christian Right has primarily focused their attention to winning local and state elections. States have the right to decide upon most of the issues that are fundamental to the Christian Right, such as education, abortion and gay marriage.

The Christian Right “has taken a far softer position on the abortion issue” (Wilcox 2006, 114) since it seems unlikely that the national law will ever be reversed. By shifting to a more secularly based rhetoric, the Christian Right can pose their moral agenda to a wider audience that may not necessarily hold Christian morals. Rather, its focus has been to restrict abortions on a state level, since they have found it easier to influence state politics. Laws prohibiting abortion in certain states still permit women to seek doctors in states that allow legal abortions. The Christian Right has successfully restricted abortion at the state level, such as the Right-to-Life of Michigan. This Christian Right organization “successfully developed voter initiatives to ban tax-paid abortions for poor women (1988) and to require parental consent for minor seeking abortion (1990)” (Penning and Smidt, 101). From 1999-2000, the Michigan pro-life chapter introduced sixty-six legislation proposals to ban abortion in Michigan. Though the Michigan Right to Life has not overturned Roe v. Wade or introduced legislation to the federal government, their victories on the state level cannot go unnoticed. By focusing their attention on a state-level rather than a national, the Christian Right would not meet as much opposition and have potential for greater success.
Education is also one of the most predominant issues that the Christian Right lobbies to change. By being elected to school boards, Christian Right activists believe that they will be able to over to overturn current policies regarding prayer in public schools, the study of evolution, and sex education. Melissa M. Deckman’s *School Board Battles, The Christian Right in Local Politics*, examines why Christian Right candidates use school board seats to extend their political agenda within communities. She demonstrates that the Christian Right has been equally as successful in running school board campaigns as other groups because they do not use stealth campaigns, but rather speak openly regarding their desires to overturn secular based curriculums. To draw this conclusion, Deckman examined the school boards of Fairfax and Garret counties in Virginia. Fairfax residents are much more religiously active and political involved. However, even though Fairfax residents were wealthier and more likely to be politically active, Deckman’s “study finds little difference between the two types of candidates” in regards to endorsement resources and success rates (Deckman, 105).

Still, Deckman does not conclude that their ability to govern through school board positions leads to the overall success of the Christian Right’s fundamental agenda, which consists of more than education reform. Though Christian Right candidates are more likely to influence local politics when endorsed by interest groups, it does not significantly aid their campaign compared to non-Christians. For example, interest groups such as the Christian Coalition and Citizens for Excellence in Education provide training sessions for Christians who wish to campaign for school board positions. However, Deckman finds that “there is little evidence to suggest that interest groups or
parties play a prominent role in most school board campaigns,” based upon her findings in Garret and Fairfax counties (109).

Even though “the Christian Right has had mixed success in terms of school board elections” and “with respect to education policy at the state and national levels,” (Deckman, 174) Christian Right activists’ enthusiasm may eventually lead to their ultimate success. Deckman suggests that the Christian Right’s lack of success at the national level will prompt them to continue fighting on a local level, yet there seems to be an increase to home school children in order to avoid such secular education. She argues that the Christian Right has not nationally influenced education because of the rise in home-schooling among Christian Right families as well as a decrease in Christian Right leadership as “the Christian Coalition has had to contend with not only the departure of most of their experienced, top-level employees” but also lawsuits against their political agenda (172). For example, in 2002 Christian Right activists tried to pass legislation permitting the proliferation of the Ten Commandments in public schools. However, this effort was dismissed within the federal court system.

The overall significance of the Christian Right, which Wilcox addresses in Onward Christian Soliders, will depend on the group’s willingness to negotiate on public policy and work alongside the Democratic Party. However, the Christian Right usually gains most of its members through its vivacious grassroots efforts, and if the group is heading in a more moderate direction, support within the government from elected Republicans and potential members could weaken. For example, incorporating less scripture based rhetoric and adopting a more secular language has allowed the Christian Right to extend their political agenda across religious boundaries. However, by widening
its audience through the creation of networks that involve liberals, more people could potentially be influenced by Christian Right ideals. Even though the Christian Right has succeeded in regards to practicing and expanding their religion publicly and escaping negative media attention, they have failed to create legislative policies that are in accordance with their most fundamental ideals. They have also succeeded in terms of intertwining politics and religion, which public policy making lacked before the 1990s.

Jelen makes the case that the Christian Right should continue to align themselves solely with the Republican Party, rather than cooperating with Democrats, in order to advance their political agenda. In *Political Culture, Political Structure, and Political Conflict: The Persistence of Church-State Conflict in the United States*, Jelen explains that if the Christian Right continues to financially and emotionally support conservative Republican candidates, there is a chance that they will be able to create new districts that are concentrated by conservatives in order to help pass future public policies based on traditionally Christian beliefs. He claims that the impact of the Christian Right will be greater at the local level, in state legislatures, and also the lower houses on the national level. So far, the Christian Right’s impact has kept the debate regarding church-state relations alive due to “deep historical roots” and “day-to-day operation of electoral politics at the subnational level” (204). The Christian Right raises a facet of American culture that few are willing to bring into the political arena, even though there are resources and outlets for everyone to influence government.

Jelen suggests in *The Church-State Conflict*, that “the American political system provides multiple access points for those who would accommodate the public expression of religious belief suggests that citizens whose beliefs fall within the political mainstream
are advantaged in the continuing church-state debate” (216). Since there are multiple ways to attack the infrastructure of the American government, Jelen realizes that the Christian Right has successfully aligned itself with the Republican Party due to parallel ideological beliefs. Another method that the Christian Right has used since the early 1900s is the infiltration of the judicial branch. For example, the Christian Right has sought to institute prayer in public schools since the 1962 Supreme Court case Engel v. Vitale prohibiting school prayer. The Christian Right has also attempted to “create a few safe districts for the minority, while allowing the majority power to be competitive in as many other legislative districts as possible,” which would allow the Christian Right to spread its influence beyond their own supporters (Jelen, 214). Yet, because of the church-state conflict that continues to exist due to cultural, constitutional, and structural limits, it creates tension but nevertheless allows the Christian Right to find a strong hold, in the broader political arena. This is because conservative candidates can continue to raise issues of concern regarding the church-state debate on all three levels of government.

Kenneth D. Wald’s publication, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, reiterates that Christian Right activists use the Republican Party as the primary vehicle to influence morality based public policies. Wald’s examination of the Christian Right focuses on its ability to work within the current political system in order to influence the policy process. Wald admits that the Christian Right has successfully used the Republican Party as a vehicle with which to influence legislative decisions by adjusting their tactics, including language, to extend their influence. Specifically, the 1994 Republic takeover of Congress “tilted appreciably in the Christian Right’s favor” (Wald,
By maintaining a strong Republican base within Congress, the Christian Right may not control American politics, but they have shifted its emphasis in regards to social issues. Federal funds are not used for abortions, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act was passed and the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated during the 1990s (Wald, 263). Since the Christian Right has learned to mobilize their social and political movement through grassroots politics, they are ideal allies to advocate for a very particular set of religious goals and beliefs. However, even though the Christian Right may have attracted members of the Republican Party, this does not necessarily create a positive relationship among politicians and citizens. Rather, Wald argues that because most Republicans are more moderate than extreme traditionalists, most are ambivalent about being automatically tied to the Christian Right through religion. However, Wald suggests that even though there may be tension within the Republican Party between traditionalist and more secular members, they maintain their ties the Christian Right to gain votes because “to some extent, such activity may even enhance the vitality of political life” (332). Wald interprets that the connection benefits the Republican Party because if the Christian Right considers their close-knit group to be politically aligned with the Republicans, this influential constituency will not vote for the Democratic Party. The tension between the Republican Party and Christian Right activists may cause rifts within conservative communities, however the tension does not motivate Christians to let go of their ideological beliefs so easily.

In terms of affecting public policy, Wald suggests that the Christian Right has only dabbled in the national legislature enough to alter policy quite insignificantly. Wald points to a number of policies on their politically charged values agenda that the Christian
Right has attempted to change. For instance, the Christian Right has convinced legislators to pass the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in order to allow all religious groups to request religious meetings in classrooms. Roe v. Wade has yet to be overturned, however the Christian Right has successfully ended federal funding to abortion facilities. Also, on the national level, abortion has been restricted through policies such as the Partial-Ban Abortion Act. Even though the Christian Right has not necessarily been commanding at the national level, they have made progress on the local level through smaller mobilization efforts. Wald specifically points to the Christian Right's efforts to control school boards through stealth campaigns to later follow through with their morally based political agenda (260).

Frank Lambert's Religion in American Politics examines the Christian Right's desire to redefine America as a Christian nation. Instead of creating their own political party to express their ideologies and fulfill their political agenda, they instead use the Republican Party as a vehicle to gain support and mobilize. Lambert also argues that pluralism spurred resentment among supporters of religiosity, thus creating evident conflicts between American social and religious groups. Secular Americans against a more religiously focused politics have created deep divides among citizens. Lambert focuses on the Protestants who push for America to become the Christian nation that, they claim, it once was during its early development. Citing Kenneth Wald, Lambert agrees that the primary significance of the Christian Right for the Republican Party is their high voter turnout yielding more conservative politicians to sway public policy and opinion to a conservative direction, such as the 1994 Republican takeover of Congress.
Controlling Congress allowed the Christian Right to advance their political agenda, even if it was not necessarily to the extent they may have hoped.

Michele Goldberg’s 2007 book *The Rise of Christian Nationalism, Kingdom Coming* examines how the Christian Right began working at the grassroots level after the fall of the Moral Majority in order to associate themselves with Republican delegates in order to gain prominence in the election process. The grassroots strategies of the Christian Coalition allowed the Christian base to expand, especially during President Bush’s terms. Goldberg does not ascertain that enhanced Christian nationalism will eventually positively benefit America. She proposes that their stronghold has slightly diminished due to the end of the idea of Christian nationalism, yet she does not discount them as a potential dominating force. Goldberg explains that the Christian Right can gain momentum in government by “working to groom a new generation of legal activists” through home schooling (172-3). She suggests that their role in during Bush’s terms has created an even more polarized country that will cause uproar from social movements attempting to pass their political agendas. Goldberg implies that the Christian Right will continue their attempt to dismantle policies such as *Roe v. Wade*, the teaching of evolution in the public school system, and homosexuality. Even though this book was published before the 2008 presidential election, Goldberg predicted that even if the country were to elect a Democratic leader, he or she could not undo the foundation that the Christian Right has developed through a strong sense of Christian nationalism and the “drive to replace society’s apprehension of reality” (23). Yet, Goldberg espouses that “the entire Christian nationalist agenda ultimately hinges on conquering the courts” (155).
and until the Christian Right overtakes the judiciary branch, they will not be fully able to promote their national agenda.

The majority of scholars have done empirical research on the extent of the Christian Right’s influence on issues from state to state. John C. Green examined an issue in Ohio with respect to the recent 2004 presidential election that impacted his conclusions in *Ohio: The Bible and the Buckeye State*. The Christian Right had a glimpse of success with the passage of a federal law, The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was signed as a federal law in 1996 by President Clinton. However, Ohio refused to pass a form of DOMA on the state level. Interestingly, when other states began developing laws attempting to abolish legislation allowing homosexual unions, Ohio drafted one of the most restrictive DOMA documents. The Christian Right sought to take this further by abolishing any chance of a homosexual union, and began fighting to add marriage restrictions to the state’s constitution. The Christian Right created a petition to abolish same-sex marriages in Ohio, otherwise known as Issue I. Green suggests that “the Christian Right’s extensive mobilization efforts” regarding their attempt to pass Issue I, “may have affected the election results” (91) contributing to Bush’s initial presidential victory. Issue I not only gained a small percentage of votes for Bush from the Christian Right, but more important showed that its ability to successfully mobilize and influence other constituents reflected their potential power to fulfill other goals of their political agenda.

James L. Guth examines South Carolina in the 1998 presidential election for Wilcox, Green and Rozell’s series in his chapter *South Carolina: Even in Zion the Heathen Rage*. Guth argues that South Carolina represents the strongest Christian Right
activists, partially due to its location in the Bible belt. "The 1996 Republican presidential primary revealed that the Christian Right was a crucial political force but was by no means monolithic" and were expected to sweep the election (23). South Carolina is a prime example of the Christian Right's failures, but more importantly, their power to bounce back and become influential time after time. Even though the Republicans eventually lost the election and did not necessarily have control, this did not stop them from continuing their fight to regain power. "The persistence of the moral issues triggered by economic modernization and population change will continue to provide incentives for political organizations" (37). South Carolina shows that the Christian Right has the ability to influence voters, but that it does not necessarily have significant power on the national level.

Guth reexamines the integral role of the Christian Right in South Carolina in the 2004 presidential election. Similar to the 1998 election, he suggests that even though the Christian Right may not have significantly affected its outcome with their votes, they nonetheless "deposited a distinct but fairly well-integrated residue in the state GOP organizational structure" (254). The Christian Right's ability to convince other groups to vote based on the same moral agenda shows the Christian Right's ability to affect the attitudes of other constituents from various other subgroups. This study reveals that even though the Christian Right may help the GOP, their success is bound to be limited due to their extremist ideas. Guth emphasizes that the Christian Right will only be able to advance is to "adapt to the new religious environment of the state and use their points of leverage within the GOP" in order to have any sort of political power in the future (255).
Another primarily Republican state that scholars primarily study in depth is Texas. James Lamar, J. L. Polinard and Robert D. Wrinkle examine Texas for Green, Rozell, and Wilcox's study of the Christian Right. In *Texas: Religion and Politics in God's Country*, they argue that rather than creating their own extremist party there, the Christian Right aligned themselves with the established Republican leaders in Texas in order to have "electoral and political influence" (45). Texas exemplifies how the Christian Right is successful at the local level due to their intensive "training on how to participate fully in the precinct meetings" in order to become the leaders of the precinct (45). Conservative Republicans, up until the 2000 publication of this book, primarily governed Texas. In terms of local elections, Christian Right candidates have successfully won seats on education boards and have aided Republican candidates' ability to win some of most influential leading positions. The Christian Right's influence in Texas politics "helps shape the ongoing political debate in the state and serves as a nettlesome thorn" for those who oppose their political agenda (55). The Christian Right will thus continue to remain a powerful group that aids Republican candidates to take over the highest leadership positions. However, their efforts at the state level may have to substantially conform to less extreme ideologies in order to attract a broader audience at the national level.

The most recent installment of Wilcox, Rozell and Green's series on the Christian Right examines the 2004 presidential election. As *Agents of Value*, the Christian Right used their moral agenda to reelect President Bush. Green, Guth and Conger explain that the Christian Right was a bit more outspoken than in the past due to "the movement's close relationship to the Republican Party and the Bush Campaign, and a broad effort to
mobilize conservative Christian voters” (23). The Christian Right was able to succeed because of their decision to “shift in political style” (50) and not because of the amount of supporters that they were able to convince. The 2004 election, in particular, illuminated the Christian Right due to their fight to ban same-sex marriages at the state-level. However, their power is questionable because of the divisions within the Christian population in terms of political beliefs.

Whether or not the Christian Right has benefit, hurt, or partially impacted American Politics as well as public policies, their mobilization efforts cannot go unnoticed. The Christian Right’s potential cannot be overlooked, even when the country is led by Democrats, since it is the opposition’s rule that entices the Christian Right and forces them to work harder in order to successfully fulfill their political agenda. Their emphasis on moral issues is only becoming more important as religious and social culture continues to become a significant factor in public policies at the state and national level. Therefore, it is unlikely that religion and politics will ever be truly separate, and therefore the Christian Right will always be able to influence the political process in one form or another.

CASE STUDIES

Abortion

*Brief History of Christian Right’s Role*

Stemming from Biblical interpretation, Christian Right activism has supported pro-life legislation more than any other morally based piece of legislation. According to genesis, all are created in the image of god, so it is their interpretation that since “both biblical teaching and scientific information suggest that we should start with the
assumption that from conception the developing fetus is a human being” (Siden, 148).
Conservative Christian Right members interpret Biblical scripture by assuming that life
begins at conception and that an unborn fetus has the same right to life as an independent
human being. The legitimacy of these assumptions is another question, but what is
important to remember is that the abortion question generates not only religious
interpretation, but also scientific. To decrease emphasis on the bible as a legitimate
reason for their anti-abortion position, the Christian Right’s stance focuses on human
rights rather than scripture so that the pro-life agenda is not depicted as religious and
extremist.

The National Right to Life Committee was established in 1972, but the first pro-
life rally took place in Dallas, Texas in 1970 at a Planned Parenthood center. The non-
violent protest did not spur the extensive media coverage that the protestors had
anticipated because the first Christian Right groups “varied and were not aimed directly
at government authority” (Utter and True, 41). Though the initial pro-life protests did not
suggest that their influence would shake the core of American politics, pro-life supporters
quickly gained media attention as Christian involvement increased substantially after the
1973 Supreme Court decision of Roe v. Wade, a nationally permitting women the right to
an abortion. Quickly, the Christian Right began using various other techniques to spread
their pro-life ideology. Using mass media sources and rallies, including “sidewalk
counseling,” pro-life activists utilized a variety of strategies to promote their agenda.
Additionally, the transition from non-violent to “confrontational tactics...shifted the
strategy of the movement” prompting one of the most salient non-violent pro-life
organizations, Operation Rescue, head by Randall Terry in New York (Utter and True,
Randall petitioned doctors who performed abortions, legitimizing his beliefs through his personal interpretation of biblical scripture. Operation Rescue may have held extremist points of view, yet the pro-life movement did not become violent until the early 1990s with the deaths of seven abortion doctors and four severely injured within five years. Organizations such as Operation Rescue "measured success by the number of arrests protestors were able to force the police to make and by their ability to prevent any abortions from being performed the day of the protest" in addition to "the amount of media coverage they were able to achieve" (Utter and True, 43).

Operation Rescue extended itself nationally, especially in Atlanta, Georgia. Randall gained a support network to begin protesting abortion clinics, yet did not gain the respect of the Atlanta police. Though there was much opposition against Operation Rescue, the Atlanta protests were a success. "The publicity that the Atlanta protests received also encouraged fundamentalist churches around the country" to encourage protests in their own communities (Utter and True, 46). In addition to attracting extensive media coverage on major television networks such as ABC and CBS, Operation Rescue also facilitated the arrest of over 750 people (Utter and True, 46). Though Operation Rescue may have dissolved, its impact cannot be forgotten, as it was one of the forerunning antiabortion organizations of the twentieth century. In accordance with a 2003 Supreme Court ruling, the violent activism of Operation Rescue diminished and was replaced with local boycotts, phone chains, and letters resurfaced as the main sources of Christian Right activism.

Facing defeat since 1973, the Christian Right finally made progress nationally when President Bush passed the Hyde Amendment. Not only did the legislation support
their beliefs, but also "conservative Christian organizations could take some of the credit...because of their lobbying efforts as well as their support for conservative candidates at election time" (Utter and True, 95). In order to promote the pro-life movement further, Ralph Reed suggested "the most effective strategy is...the appointment of pro-life judges, to pass pro-life laws in every state possible" and "to change public attitudes" (Reed, 272). Current pro-life organizations use Reed's methods in attempts to overturn Roe v. Wade. Pro-life organizations do not necessarily seek to institute a constitutional amendment to abolish the rights of women, but rather acknowledge that they first must change the attitude of Americans before they can change the constitution. In order to do so, the Christian Right must overcome Americans gradually on a smaller scale, which also holds true for most other issues on the Christian Right agenda.

The Christian Right has not fully fulfilled their political agenda regarding abortion; as they have yet to overturn Roe v. Wade. However, they have made a substantial impact as pro-life organizations continue to be established throughout the country. Though Operation Rescue may have caused negative sentiments towards anti-abortion activists, their persistence prompted "Christian groups and individuals [to continue] their opposition to abortion" in addition to the implementation of "new strategies to combat what they considered a fundamental evil" (Utter and True, 48). By shifting tactics and continuing protests, the Christian Right has affected the hearts and minds of Americans by negotiating. For instance, Wilcox points out that because the Christian Right has opened the discussion by broadening their viewpoint on when abortions should and should not take place. By shifting their focus, the Christian Right
has the support of 45 percent of Americans, expanding their base of support to further progress the fight against abortion (Wilcox 2006, 168). The ever-changing tactics of the Christian Right has improved the support base in terms of abortion, and thus has made a tremendous impact on American politics even if they have yet to achieve their greatest goals.

A Case Study – National Right to Life’s Pennsylvania Chapter

One of the more recent national debates, which all pro-life supporters were previously attending to, was the latest edition of the national healthcare bill. In response, the National Right to Life continues to promote their pro-life campaign by fighting against federal funding for abortions. Dr. Denise Wilcox serves as the Pennsylvania delegate to the National Right to Life and a member of the board of directors for the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation, which is the state chapter of the National Right to Life established in 1979. Specifically, the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation’s mission states that it is “committed to promoting the dignity and value of human life from conception to natural death and to restoring legal protection for preborn children. Through legislation, political action, education and other legal means, we proclaim the truth about abortion” (PA Pro-Life Federation). Dr. Wilcox unites the nationally recognized organization to the small, local chapters in order to reach a more expansive audience.

Dr. Wilcox joined the pro-life movement immediately after the 1973 Supreme Court ruling of Roe v. Wade. Acknowledging that laws needed to be overturned in order to save lives, Dr. Wilcox joined the National Right to Life around 1995. As the state delegate, Dr. Wilcox is required to attend about four National Right to Life meetings across the county each year to discuss all issues that involve the preservation of life.
Additionally, she attends an annual meeting with the other state delegates to discuss how they can influence the United Nations as a nongovernmental organization. The National Right to Life not only works within the United States, but also has a global view of the pro-life movement. Though the National Right to Life may transcend state and even country borders, Dr. Wilcox adamantly acknowledges that the National Right to Life can only be effective on the national and global level if they are first effective on the local level as modes of “outreach in every county makes a bigger and stronger organization giving [pro-life organizations] an advantage.”

Established as a kitchen-sink organization, the National Right to Life continues to utilize grassroots tactics to permeate the American public and government officials. Wilcox stresses “all the little people in all of the little chapters make the National Right to Life such an effective organization.” This approach has prompted to the establishment of over 3,000 National Right to Life Chapters across the country. “As many counties as possible” are necessary in order to “make the biggest difference” because “strong chapters lead to strong organizations.” Wilcox believes that an extensive network of localities through a grassroots approach has proven successful because the National Right to Life first started as a “kitchen table organization” where women would organize their mission from their homes. By keeping the organization base within homes, Wilcox assesses the success of the Pennsylvania chapter by the amount of homes that have aided the pro-life effort, which has substantially increased since her first year as the Pennsylvania representative. Wilcox uses her time and money to develop the local chapters and influence Pennsylvania residents to visit congressmen, march in local and national parades, manning pregnant crisis centers, and praying at abortion clinics.
Establishing personal connections through various methods of “direct contact are more effective than throwing money” to people. Wilcox espouses that though the National Right to Life lacks the necessary funds to promote a comprehensive and fully developed pro-life campaign, having an abundance of supporters makes the organization stronger. Specifically, the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation has about 100,000 members but also has reached out to over 10 million through media resources. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation works with about 3,500 churches within Pennsylvania to continue gaining support (PA Pro-Life Federation).

According to Dr. Wilcox, the National Right to Life spreads information through various modes of outreach. The Internet provides the fastest and most assessable method. Through facebook, twitter, online newsletters, and emails, Dr. Wilcox maintains a constant connection with Pennsylvania residents. Though these impersonal methods may be beneficial, Dr. Wilcox emphasizes the importance of face-to-face interactions to snowball the greatest support and numbers at events. Within Pennsylvania, the National Right to Life holds an educational banquet boasting 600 to 800 supporters annually in addition to an outreach convention in Scranton every other year drawing about 600 residents. Not only do these conventions discuss issues of life preservation, but speakers also inform supporters how and why to endorse certain political candidates and become more politically involved to overturn legislation that does not align with their conservative viewpoint.

Throughout her time at the National Right to Life, Dr. Wilcox is pleased with the success of her work and the degree of devotion many Pennsylvania residents now have with the National Right to Life. Wilcox accesses the success of her work by
acknowledging that the number of attendees to conventions, banquets, conferences, and other National Right to Life events has grown tremendously. Over the past fifteen years as the state delegate, she has seen a fundamental shift necessary to continue the organization's efforts. Recently, the involvement of young women has increased substantially. For example, 70 percent of the 2010 National March to Life in Washington D.C. were women under the age of 30. Wilcox recognizes that the movement is being support by young women who are "energized" and have the ability to rejuvenate the movement. As pro-life supporters become more involved on the local level through county chapters, such as the York County Pennsylvanians for Human Life, Wilcox hopes that national legislation can be overturned and public opinion will shift to a pro-life majority in the near future.

The York County Pennsylvanians for Human Life chapter serves as only one of the many umbrella chapters within the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation, an affiliate of the National Right to Life Committee. Current president, Matthew Jordan, first established the York County chapter in 2002. With the support of two other York County residents, Jordan wished to reinvigorate pro-life activism within the county. Unsure of which type of approach would yield the highest results, Jordan divided the pro-life supporters prompting the development of two pro-life organizations in the county. The Pro-Life Ministry was created to not participate in political activity, as it is registered as a nongovernmental 501 (C)(3) organization. The Pro-Life Ministry is maintained by the major churches of York County in order to raise money and hold services. Jordan has established the York County Pennsylvanian's for Human Life as a tax-free group, unaffiliated with a particular church, in order to facilitate activism within the political
arena without penalization. Though the York County Pennsylvania’s for Human Life has no legal obligations to report to the state or national organizations to which it is affiliated, there is constant communication among the three to promote the most comprehensive and strongest pro-life approach possible. The national level constantly sends legislation alerts to the state, which then feeds them to its chapters across the state, including York County. This top-down process allows more Americans to be alerted of legislation success and failures in addition to encourage lobbying on behalf of the organization. Because the York County chapter is affiliated indirectly with the National Right to Life, the smaller chapter can feed on the publicity and efforts sponsored by a more well-funded and established organization.

Using his own funds for the past eight years, Jordan has developed what he believes is a successful activist group that continues to promote pro-life legislation. As president of the chapter, Jordan organizes all of his efforts from his home in York, Pennsylvania. With the support of his wife, Jordan has transformed his home into the chapter’s main office. Working with a team of three of administrators, including treasurer Roy Sanders, assistant treasurer Pat Masterson and administrative coordinator Margaret Taylor-Brown, Jordan oversees all of the events his York County chapter participates in yearly. Though his website, Jordan promotes the motto, “Life is the right of every child, not a special privilege for the fortunate, the planned, and the perfect,” Jordan stresses “the importance of informing and educating the residents of York County of the accurate facts regarding abortions, rather than the skewed versions presented by pro-choice supporters.” In order to counteract the spread of misinformation, Jordan has developed a pro-life campaign that he displays at multiple events each year within York
County as he feels that it is his responsibility to reach out to his fellow community members. Jordan has created the York County Chapter to be “organized, visible, [and] incredible, so that we can be effective.” Jordan does not seek to be aggressive with people, yet takes a firm approach in a “tasteful manner” so that “they knew we were there.” To promote his goals to York County residents, Jordan uses a well organized website, e-mails, newsletters, faxes, and his own pamphlets and materials to hand out to his supporters. As his organization has expanded, Jordan believes that his efforts have led to a shift in attitudes among York residents. More than ever before, Jordan has seen an increased level of interest over the past five years, as more want to discuss abortion issues with him and are beginning to fund his chapter.

Funding the exhibit himself, Jordan believes it is crucial to “get in front of people in appropriate settings” to educate and inform York County residents. In particular, Jordan has been involved in a few particular annual events in York County to promote his organization’s stance on abortion. In particular, he has participated in the York Women’s Show for the past six or seven years. Providing literature and his own expertise on the subject, Jordan purchased a booth for a minimal sum to educate the 10,000 people that annually attend the fair. He believed that this fair was the perfect opportunity to educate women about the ramifications of abortions as the fair was developed to strictly highlight only prominent women’s issues. Finding that face-to-face interaction proved most successful, Jordan began to participate in the York County Fair four years ago, which boasts about 300,000 people annually. Pleased with the success of his efforts, Jordan was able to have 1,000 people sign a petition against the initial national healthcare bill presented by President Obama and doubled that number of signatures over this past year.
Additionally, he participates in the Mother’s Day Fair as well as the annual Codora State Park Fair in Hanover, which draws about 38,000 people. He notes that this was one of his favorite events to attend because it is focused around the family as a unit, which is crucial to the pro-life campaign. Again, he uses this event as an opportunity to chat with local residents and counter the misinformation presented by the pro-choice activists. For each fair that he participates, Jordan highlights a certain theme. Some past ones have included the effects and risks of abortion, abortion as a business rather than a means of healthcare, and alternatives to abortion. This year, Jordan focused his on petitions against Obama’s proposed healthcare bill, which would have permitted federal funding to abortion clinics. Jordan’s participation at these fairs have heightened awareness of abortion politics and increased the number of supporters against abortion in York County. As each year passes, Jordan finds that more York County residents sign his petitions and are more likely to engage in conversation regarding his pro-life campaign. Jordan sends the petitions to local politicians in hopes of gaining their attention to vote against any sort of legislation that would facilitate abortions.

Identifying the York County Chapter as a “service organization for all the pro-life groups in the county,” Jordan believes that it is necessary to transcend county lines and involve York County residents in national events as well. Jordan feels that March of Life, held in Washington D.C. to commemorate the day Roe v. Wade was passed by the United States Supreme Court, as an opportune event for York residents to participate. Highly disappointed with the turnout and lack of organization, Jordan made it his responsibility to organize buses to Washington D.C for the event. By coordinating the bus system and mapping a clear itinerary for those attending, Jordan increased the
number of participants York County sent to the march by filling a few buses that were once only half full.

Pennsylvania was well represented at the 2010 March for Life beyond the buses that Jordan organized. About three hundred Pennsylvania residents left from public locations in Luzerne and Scranton the morning of the march according to Christopher Calore and Anne Domin who are members of Pennsylvanians for Human Life, the same organization as Jordan. Reconfirming Dr. Wilcox’s testimony that many at the march were younger than usual, Calore and Domin acknowledged that about half of those who accompanied them were students. Fearful of Obama’s stance on abortion, pro-life supporters must be more active than ever before. By attending marches such as the March for Life, “pressure will be put on elected officials” to impede any efforts to aid women seeking abortions (Seder, 2009). Pro-life supporters of Pennsylvania are especially fearful that the Pennsylvania’s Abortion Control Act “includes a right-of-conscience provision that allows those morally or religiously opposed to abortion to refrain from participating in the procedure” will be overturned (Seder, 2009). Seeking to preserve laws such as the Abortion Control Act is crucial to penetrating American politics on the state level, and perhaps one day transcending to the national if enough supporters actively pursue advocating for its implementation.

To gain supporters for the next march, as well as to increase the membership of the York County chapter, Jordan has devised a new project based upon the traditions of Respect Life Sunday, which takes place every October. To commemorate Respect Life Sunday, it is customary to post a white cross on one’s home to commemorate all of the abortions that have occurred since 1973. Jordan hopes to expand this tradition by having
every pro-life home in York County boast a white cross at all times to nonviolently illustrate their willingness to continue the fight for human life. Although he admitted that it is probably impossible to have everyone post a white cross on their front door, Jordan was optimistic saying “even if we come up very short, it is an attention getter and a conversation piece.” Jordan knows that the first way to start conversations about the issue is by gaining people’s attention.

Jordan purposefully created the York County Pennsylvanian’s for Human Life as a tax-free organization so that he could petition legislators on the local, state and national levels. To be as effective as possible on the local level, Jordan has delegated representatives from York County’s seven voting districts to lobby their local and state officials. Jordan believed that by delegating representatives of smaller areas, the committee members would have an easier time promoting and developing a larger support base for the chapter as a whole. Quite pleased with the results of his efforts, Jordan mentioned that the most successful sub-district as of March 2010 has been the Hanover committee of ten residents. Not only do these committees reach out to community members, but also they are also responsible for lobbying government officials. Specifically, Jordan and the district representatives have influenced Pennsylvania Senator Todd Plats with phone calls, emails and faxes. Gaining the support of congressmen allows Jordan to promote pro-life outside of York County.

Jordan specifically seeks to influence York County, as he believes that his efforts to educate and inform his fellow community members can change the overall structure of the country’s mentality towards abortion as well as affect national legislation. Several times a day, members of the York County chapter call the White House and their local
and state officials seeking to influence their vote. In particular, Jordan has focused his efforts on congressman Todd Platts, who he lobbies with emails, phone calls, and faxes to remind them of the ramifications of their vote. Jordan seeks to overturn current legislation, yet if his own congressmen continue to vote in favor of abortion, Jordan’s efforts will slowly fade. Therefore, he needs the support of his congressman to succeed. Jordan does endorse certain political candidates over others and attempts to persuade others to do so as well using pamphlets that he places on car windshields as well as holding signs in the town square.

Though Jordan, and three other administrators, fund the York County Pennsylvanian’s for Human Life chapter themselves, they are now finding it difficult to support their organization on his own. In an effort to expand his organization and his support base, Jordan has recently begun a few modes of fundraising. He now requests that all members donate twenty dollars annually. Additionally, he sells advertising slots to websites for $120 for six month or a one-time fee of thirty dollars. These graphics would link to pro-life websites explaining the ramifications of abortion. Lastly, one can buy a memorial card for ten dollars to send to a loved one. The monies received from these fundraising efforts would support his booths at the annual fairs as well as allow him to purchase fetal models that he now borrows from the local church.

Jordan has been “pleased with what he has seen” in terms of increased participation and interest of residents in order to further the impact of the York County Pennsylvanian’s for Human Life. This past year, a survey was conducted showing a decreased number of abortions in York County in 2008 by eighteen percent dropping form 682 in 2007 to 558 in 2008 and a decrease of women seeking abortion services from
623 in 2007 to 603 in 2008 (Stevens, 2010). Thought the reasons for the decline are unknown and could be attributable to multiple factors, the decrease is a victory for pro-life advocates even though the state of Pennsylvania actually had a 5.8 percent increase between 2007 and 2008. These statistics according to Pennsylvania Health Department and Planned Parenthood of York County show that pro-life efforts are more effective on the smaller county scale rather than the state level.

Though he is elderly and ill, Jordan’s enthusiasm and devotion to the pro-life campaign illustrates the salience of his efforts to affect local and national legislation. Though the York County chapter has focused its attention only on the local level, Jordan emphasized that pro-life activism must first invigorate people on the local level before the general public can shift viewpoints. Throughout the last eight years, Jordan has witnessed York residents become less apprehensive about approaching his booth or chatting with him during fairs or other events. Holding his organization responsible for community outreach, Jordan opts not to expose the public to extremely graphic photographs or other media as other pro-life organizations have done in the past. He knows that there are specific “legitimate and acceptable times that you have to stick your neck out,” such as when he held signs in the town square. Yet, on the whole, Jordan has developed his chapter to get people to think critically about abortion in addition to providing information and education.

Jordan acknowledges that he must first approach localities before national politics can be affected. His willingness to provide a comprehensive history and account of the projects that he is currently working on as president shows his desire to spread the pro-life agenda in every outlet possible. He is appreciative of those who take the time to
listen to his views, his experiences, his knowledge regarding abortion, and is especially receptive to any and all questions regarding the abortion issue.

Homosexuality

Brief History of Christian Right's Role

According to the Christian Right, their Bible defines marriage as the union between a man and a woman. Since homosexuality "results from an individual choice rather than being a genetically determined characteristic" the Christian Right has prioritized abolishing legislation that promotes homosexual marriages (Utter and True, 78). Establishing their opinion based on biblical text, "the movement was born out of a dense set of networks and a distinct ideology and collective identity that were the products of decades of institution building by Christian evangelicals" (Fetner, 3).

Before the 1970s, the Christian Right opposed homosexuality but not actively or publicly. Though tensions did exist before 1970 as homosexuality grew in western culture, Christian Right activists did not pursue political action against the increased homosexual population. Rather, the Christian Right was focused on developing a network of strong organizations, and at the time, the Christian Right's establishment as a political movement did not intertwine with the rise of gay and lesbian supporters. However, World War II sparked a great increase of homosexuality in the United States as many men left for war and women were forced into the workforce. After years of living in unbalanced gender societies, men and women began to identify themselves as gay or lesbian by separating themselves into specific societies, threatening the traditional family values and norms of Christians across the country. Though gays and lesbians united to form a strong subculture during the mid-1900s, they were unable to avoid torment from
outsiders. McCarthy accused homosexuals as “threats to the nation’s security because, as sexual perverts, their low morals and marginal status” made them easy targets for foreign spies (Fetner, 13). As a result, all federal employees believed to be gay or lesbian were dismissed, which then transcended to the state and local levels as well by both public and private businesses. The federal government’s hatred towards homosexuals trickled into small towns, which prompted some to begin grassroots activist groups to overturn such unfair treatment.

In the 1970s, homosexual activism increased substantially through the establishment of grassroots organizations dedicated to progressive legislation. However, conservatives who strongly opposed such leftist ideologies developed their own organizations to counter the progress of liberals. The most religious conservatives promoting pro-life and anti-feminism led the anti-gay movement as well. Anita Bryant initiated the evangelical Christian anti-gay movement, Save Our Children, Inc. in 1977 (later renamed Protect America’s Children) to abolish gay rights, which later dissolved due to her own personal dilemmas. Another prominent anti-gay supporter was California Senator John Briggs who proposed an amendment that would not allow homosexuals to work within the state’s public school system. The Briggs Initiative “claim that the importance of children’s safety justifies the denial of equal access to employment” (Fenter, 24-5) did not pass as San Francisco held one of the largest gay communities at that time in addition to a homosexual government official. To combat the anti-gay movement, there was a vast increase of Americans who identified as homosexual to fight for their rights.
During the 1970s, Christian Right activism opposing homosexuality was quite successful on the local level through grassroots efforts. Though Bryant and Briggs left the anti-gay movement due to personal reasons, the movement continued to fight for traditional Christian values. Influential groups attempted to penetrate the Republican Party in order to pass anti-gay legislation. Anti-gay supporters saw this movement as “a new opportunity for political participation within the religious right, with a chance to make an unprecedented impact on the secular world in mobilizing their forces into a voting bloc” (Fetner, 58). New grassroots organizations were developed to counter the growing secular mentality of the country and remind Americans of the traditional family values defined by Christian scripture.

Through the 1980s, the homosexual movement developed substantially requiring the Christian Right to again transform their political strategies. However, the threat of AIDS prompted the mobilization of the Christian Right to rise against homosexuals yet again. The Moral Majority “stirred up tremendous support among a body of conservative grassroots activists who were previously apolitical” yet “lacked the institutional infrastructure to sustain itself over the long term” (Fetner, 56). The Moral Majority raised money and held mass rallies to gain supporters and funding across the United States, which illustrates that “mobilization of supporters was an important stepping-stone for demonstrating the voting power of Christian evangelicals” (Fetner, 59). Seeking media outlets to expand their outreach, the Moral Majority used Christian television, radio programs, and mailings to educate the public about their agenda. As a result, their broad audience “provided funds, a voting constituency, and volunteer forces for national and local causes” (Fetner, 59). The first attempt to pass national legislation banning
federal funds to aid homosexual organizations failed in 1981 resulting in a shift from grassroots activism to a network of "large-scale, top-down organizations with multi-issue platforms" (Fetner, 57). This structure proved beneficial because it drew supporters of pro-life and anti-feminist to also support their anti-gay agenda to prohibit special rights of homosexuals, stemming from a desire to end secularism within the United States.

Quickly running low on funds, the Moral Majority was not successful enough to revive itself. Its inability to promote a conservative agenda to congressmen hurt the movement's influence on the federal government. As a result, the Christian Right was forced to adopt a new strategy to implement its political agenda across the country. "Efforts to influence policy were more scaled back...both in terms of policy and scope and scale" resulting in "efforts [that] addressed fewer issues and focused primarily on local and state politics rather than those at the federal level" (Fetner, 67). By limiting the breadth of focus, the Christian Right hoped to convince supporters that lobbying was the most effective way to change public policy. However, this strategy failed because the Moral Majority did not adequately organize smaller chapters to directly influence Americans but rather relied too heavily on indirect means such as newsletters. By remaining a national organization, the Moral Majority inevitably fell apart.

Yet soon after the demise of the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition grew under the supervision of Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed. During the later 1980s, Christian organizations worked to infiltrate the Republican Party within each individual state and "managed to successfully integrate its agenda into party politics at the national, state and local levels" proving their ability to influence the electoral process such as their monopoly over Republican candidates during the 1980s (Fetner, 65). Though the
Christian Right was not a dominant political party, most Americans felt their influence on the local level, including the gay movement. The Christian Right was much stronger than the lesbian and gay communities as a result of their political groundings, and thus had the power to influence their communities. “It became clear that even influencing a political party did not necessarily translate into the implementation of social policies,” which allowed the Christian Right to succeed at the local level (Fetner, 65). Thus, merely because the Christian Right and the gay right organizations could not promote their respective legislations, the Christian Right was more stable and viable than the gay rights movement during the 1980s and thus able to attract supporters.

Though the Christian Right extended their influence in other social policy issues during the 1980s and 1990s, yet their alignment with the Republic Party failed to prevent President Clinton’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue” policy in addition to his overall support of homosexual rights. The conflicting viewpoints of the Republican Party, which was run by mostly supporters of Christian values, fought against Clinton during the 1992 presidential nominations (Fetner, 79). Seeking to use their traditional values as the base to their campaign, a faction of the GOP fought against homosexual rights seeking Pat Buchanan as their leader while others promoted Bush’s presidential campaign. Though the Christian Right maintained a stronghold during both President Bush and President Clinton’s terms, they were unable to overturn federal legislation that prevented their political agenda from sweeping American politics and culture. For example, the Christian Right fought to prevent gay and lesbian couples from having legal rights to adopt children as well as prohibit homosexuals from enlisting into the military (Fetner, 79). Even though many Christian Right organizations “were having great
success mobilizing constituents, in terms of policy they were much more successful in their local efforts than on the national state” (Fetner, 81). For the Christian Right, mobilizing and influencing did not guarantee policymaking rights. Though the Christian Right could rally a number of supporters, they were not able to overturn policies pertaining specifically to homosexuality. Their inability to penetrate legislation, even with their mass numbers, illustrates that the Christian Right may have succeeded in regards to public opinion but could not be as successful in terms of public policy overhaul.

To promote their anti-gay agenda, the Christian Right found that grassroots activism was most beneficial as this strategy emphasized protesting on the local level. In response to the lack of emphasis Republican officials gave to gays and lesbians, New York City residents were forced to establish Aids Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in 1987 to fight for help to fight AIDS. Queer Nation, another gay and lesbian group, was also established to emphasize all of the other issues associated with homosexuality. Christians against homosexuality used the language and pictures promoted by ACT UP and Queer Nation to gain even more support from their constituents through mailings and The Gay Agenda, a video that highlighted homosexuality as a danger to society. The early 1990s experienced an increased interest of homosexuality on both sides of the issue, especially for Christians who wished to maintain a traditional family setting.

Anti-gay initiatives served as one of the most influential tactics used by the Christian Right to attack gay rights. These initiatives served to promote policy suggestions from local constituents without seeking out government officials. The suggestion of the initiatives “proposed legislation that would make it illegal to protect
lesbian and gay people from discrimination” (Fetner, 94). Though these ballots were issued on the local and state level, all supporters were united under Christian values. The Christian Coalition provided the funding to continue the effort to abolish any national acknowledgement of Americans who identified themselves as gay or lesbian. Choosing their language carefully, the Christian Right needed to frame their argument within a secular framework in order to be heard across religious boundaries. Overall, the Christian Right successfully limited gay rights across the country, especially in more rural areas. The Supreme Court trial Romer v. Evans (1996) halted many Christian initiatives as it decided that the ballots were unconstitutional (Fetner, 98). In response, Christian groups retreated back to working alongside the Republican Party to affect legislation directly.

In addition to gaining political supporters, the Christian Right raised issues of homosexuality within church settings. Debates within public and political arenas swayed the national culture prompting many churches to prohibit the attendance of homosexuals as many pastors preached to their congregations that homosexuality was a sin. Ironically, the original purpose of the Christian Right’s anti-gay campaign backfired during the 1990s. “While the intention of the religious right was to deny lesbian and gay claims, their activism played a role in fostering the cultural change that made lesbian and gay lives visible” (Fetner, 103). Though their efforts actually helped the lesbian and gay movement, the Christian Right remained a vibrant movement attempting to abolish homosexuality from American life. By lobbying and boycotting organizations that promoted lesbian and gay culture, the Christian Right fought endlessly to diminish funding to the National Endowment for the Arts, which showcased many pieces based on
homosexuality. “With their superior financial and media resources, the religious right was able to pose multiple challenges across a number of political venues,” prompting success as they controlled the course of homosexual debates (Fetner, 104). This example illustrates that the Christian Right not only wished to influence the political system, but also the hearts and minds of the American public.

The two major issues of the 1990s were homosexual treatments and same sex marriages. Many Christians opposed to homosexuality deemed it as a mental illness that could be prevented or overturned through sexual conversion therapy treatments. Through church meetings to inpatient facility centers, unqualified Christians sought to rid homosexuals of their sins. Remaining separate from political activism and the public sphere, religious counselors penetrated the media in 1998 when a few Christian organizations believed that it was necessary to start involving the public. “The ‘Truth in Love’ campaign...publicized sexual conversion’s claim to heal homosexuals and featured ex-gay people who gave testimonials of the treatment’s effectiveness” through magazines, television, and other print ads (Fetner, 109). This campaign helped the Christian Right because the gay movement was forced to place all of their attention on countering the ads rather than opposing the Christian Right’s legislation moves.

Gay marriage legislation became an issue on the national and local levels. Politically, the Christian Right presented this issue in order to gain even more conservative supporters. President Clinton signed the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) after passing both the Senate and House of Representatives. DOMA defined marriage as “a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife,” which many states adopted as amendments to their own constitutions. However, many
states have recently granted either legal civil unions or same-sex marriage to homosexual couples as their Supreme Courts deemed the prevention of same-sex couples unconstitutional. Continuing the fight to oppose same-sex marriages, the Christian Right proposed the Federal Marriage Amendment in fear that DOMA would be overturned on the grounds of its supposed unconstitutional framework.

The most developed and activist organizations are Traditional Values Coalition, Focus on the Family and the National Legal Foundation. Focus on the Family has attempted to influence public opinion through open conferences and education. President Tony Perkins attempted to institute his Marriage Affirmation and Protection Amendment in Massachusetts in additional to a version that he wished to be incorporated into the national constitution. Instead Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 that supported to timely involvement of the National Legal Foundation to promote the legislation. Two of the most important Supreme Court cases that defined marriage laws occurred in 2003. The outcomes “affirming gay rights were taken by conservative Christian groups as conformation of their belief that United States courts were out of

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1 States that endorse civil unions or gay marriage include as of April 2010:

**Issues marriage licenses to same-sex couples:** Massachusetts, Connecticut, California, Iowa, Vermont, New Hampshire, District of Columbia

**Recognizes same-sex marriages from other states:** Rhode Island, New York, Maryland

**Allows civil unions, providing state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples:** New Jersey (Note: In Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire, same sex marriage has replaced civil unions.)

**Statewide law provides nearly all state-level spousal rights to unmarried couples (Domestic Partnerships):** California, Oregon, Nevada, Washington

**Statewide law provides some state-level spousal rights to unmarried couples (Domestic Partnerships):** Hawaii, Maine, District of Columbia, Wisconsin

**For a more extensive and specific listing, please see Same Sex Marriage, Civil Unions and Domestic Partnerships**


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control" further prompting “Christian groups to take action to preserve what they considered the biblical mandate regarding acceptable sexual relations” (Utter and True, 79). Lawrence v. Texas "invalidated antisodomy laws, thereby legalizing homosexual relations throughout the United States,” while Goodridge v. Department of Public Heath in Massachusetts “declared the state’s ban on gay marriage unconstitutional” (Utter and True, 80). Since states can declare marriage laws, Christian Right activism has focused on state and local governments rather than at the national level.

A Case Study – The American Family Association of Pennsylvania

Donald E. Wildmon, the pastor at First United Methodist Church in Southaven Mississippi, first established the American Family Association (AFA) in 1977. Serving as one of the most influential pro-life activist movements in America, AFA vastly expanded their outreach over the past thirty years. Using multiple means of outreach, “AFA uses all these means to communicate an outspoken, resolute, Christian voice throughout America” (American Family Association) in order to influence American politics and public opinion nationally. AFA’s objective is to promote family values according to biblical scripture, which aims to preserve traditional marriage and family values, morality, and life. Primarily using recent technological advancements, AFA created television networks, Internet sites and radio stations to promote their vision of how Americans should incorporate Christian values into their lives and for future generations. AFA seeks to provide a strong Christian coalition nationally through local chapters across the country.

One method the AFA used to uphold their traditional values during the 1990s was boycotts promoting opposition to the homosexual movement. Specifically, the AFA
sought out companies with lesbian and gay employees. According to Fetner, One of the most well known AFA boycott of the 1990s was against the Disney Corporation for their non-discrimination rules regarding employment. In response, the Disney Corporation held “Gay and Lesbian Day” to uphold their favorable stance towards homosexuality. The boycott eventually dissolved in 2005, yet it significantly showed that corporations promoted the rights of homosexuals. In addition to boycotts against Disney, there were also boycotts against companies such as Cracker Barrel, Volkswagon, Microsoft and American Airlines during the 1990s. The AFA wished to “create undesired negative public attention and damage a company’s reputation” if they did hire homosexuals (Fetner, 107). Though the AFA boycott against these companies failed, their boycotts did draw attention to homosexual tensions of the 1990s. However, their failed attempts to overturn legislation permitting homosexual couples to the same rights as heterosexual couples damaged their steadfast mentality as it became clear that gay rights were becoming one of the most debated and talked about issues across the county. In fact, in 2008 the AFA successfully influenced Ford Motor Company and McDonald’s “backed out of their promotion of the homosexual agenda, in part due to the flood of responses from AFA activists” (American Family Association).

With chapters in every state, the American Family Association of Pennsylvania works alongside the national organization to promote base values based on Judeo-Christian scripture. Each chapter, regardless of state, promotes a Statement of Purpose, which identifies the key objectives and reasons of the AFA. The Pennsylvania version lists six features as follows:
1) To make a positive difference in our community by standing up for traditional Judeo-Christian values.

2) To encourage the faith community to break the silence on controversial issues and be a voice for pro-family values.

3) To provide leadership in defending the Biblical ethic of decency.

4) To educate the public on the negative effects of pornography and violence in the media.

5) To do what we can to encourage, promote and defend families.

6) To protect children from those who would seek to commercialize or propagandize them. (http://www.afaofpa.org/statement_of_purpose.htm)

In addition to being the key objectives of the national organization, these six goals also encompass the foundation of the AFA of Pennsylvania. Seeking to gain supporters, these ideals motivated the current president of the Pennsylvania chapter to become involved since the organization’s establishment.

As president of the Pennsylvania chapter, Diane Gramley has worked with American Family Association of Pennsylvania since its establishment in June of 2000. Alongside a board of directors, Ms. Gramley identified that Pennsylvania’s key objectives over the past ten years have included educational organization at the state and national level, methods of outreach to local and state lawmakers, and sending information pamphlets. Primarily, Gramley’s responsibly as president is to constantly update Pennsylvania residents of current state and national issues that are important to the AFA. Gramley’s “main goal is to defend traditional values because America is changing before our very eyes” and it is necessary to “remind people of what America used to be like.”
Without targeting a specific audience, AFA works mostly as an educational organization. With a state-wide membership of 12,000, action letters and e-mails are primarily used to suggest steps for Americans to take. Whether it be contacting a legislator or promoting Christian ideals to others, anyone who wishes to defend Christian scripture is encouraged to participate. The most salient issues, according to Gramley, include defending the family, protecting the unborn, and the overall preservation of the traditional family since family acts as the “bedrock of society” and must be upheld in a specific manner that abides by Judeo-Christian scriptures.

Though Gramley does not participate in active lobbying, she does have a specific agenda she wishes to see America conform to by educating society. Stressing traditional family values, Gramley addresses how she envisions three of the main aspects of the Christian Right agenda, which the American Family Association also supports. Regarding marriage, Gramley defined traditional marriage as “strictly between one man and one woman” in addition to banning civil unions. Gramley supports the Marriage Protection Amendment and stresses the need for traditional values to be upheld by Americans across the country. Regarding the Dover Area School Board trial in 2004-2005, Gramley organized educational information to counter media negativity during the proceedings. Specially, she accused the media of “distorting the whole scenario” of the Dover Area School Board trial in order to manipulate the citizens against the board members pushing for the implementation of the intelligent design policy. Gramley stressed the need to prevent instances where the media exhibited negative sentiments towards efforts to use religious scripture. In response to the current abortion policy and the proposed new healthcare plan, Gramley’s blunt and abrupt response encompassed
what she felt was necessary for the country's well being. Opposed to supporting any type of national funding to abortion clinics, Gramley supports the Stuppak-Pitss amendment to abolish national funds that supported pro-choice. Though *Roe v. Wade* has yet to be overturned, Gramley stressed that the only way to approach the situation was to educate American citizens about the consequences of abortion, primarily focusing on traditional family values and the idea that all have the right life.

Though the AFA of Pennsylvania and the national AFA do not lobby congressmen specifically, they encourage others to do so through e-mailing, writing letters, or attending conferences held by their state congressmen and local government officials. Gramley tries to educate Pennsylvanians citizens to make them "more aware of issues that others don't deal with," such as exposing congressmen who do not legislate according to their campaign platform. As president, she directs the Pennsylvania chapter to first gain support locally in order for that power to transcend to the national politics.

The AFA's success does not necessarily depend on overturning legislation, though this outcome is most favored. But rather Gramley primarily sets her goals to overturn the hearts and minds of Americans, and in this respect she has been quite effective. On July 14, 2006, the Senate formally confirmed that America's motto would be "In God We Trust," which was first declared as the nation's motto in 1956. The 106th Congress in 2000 deemed posting the motto on public buildings appropriate, which is why the AFA of PA pushed Pennsylvania schools to incorporate American's National Anthem in all classrooms. Using the American Family Association's vast resources, almost thirty schools in eight counties of western Pennsylvania have now posted the National Anthem someone on their buildings. In addition, other public facilities in
western Pennsylvania have also posted the motto including Clintonville Post Office, Franklin City Hall and Crawford County Courthouse (AFA of PA). This was a significant victory for the AFA because liberal organizations, such as the ACLU, could not legally argue for its take down. Since the preservation of traditional family is the first and foremost goal of the AFA, promoting such a religious toned motto on public schools and other buildings was a victory even though it did not necessary overturn any state or national piece of legislation. Merely gaining support and motivating others to promote Christian doctrine makes the AFA effective and successful as support increases yearly in terms of brochures and emails sent to Pennsylvania residents.

The AFA of PA supports any legislative effort to preserve the traditional definition of marriage in Pennsylvania. From 2009-2010, Senator John Eichelberger has pushed his own Marriage Protection Amendment in Congress. According to one of Gramley’s newsletters released on May 19, 2009, the “AFA of PA fully supports his efforts and believes Pennsylvania must act quickly to preserve natural marriage.” It is clearly difficult to assess the AFA’s progress in terms of legislation, yet the organization’s willingness to continue fighting for their Christian ideology and have the support of congressmen such as Senator Eichelberger, proves their efficiency and progress. As the organization grows exponentially, boasting two million online supporters and almost two hundred thousand journal subscribers, it is clear that the AFA has efficiently created an organization that influences a portion of American voters.

The AFA in general has been particularly efficient because of their use of technology. For instance, the AFA funded a short documentary on the ramifications of allowing same-sex marriages in California known as Proposition 8. Although it did
eventually pass and California now recognizes same-sex marriages, the initial video sent to over 21,000 churches in California prevented the piece of legislation from passing for months. Additionally, the AFA has increased their use of radio to influence Americans and educate them how to lobby congressmen and use their power to change legislation. For instance, in 2007, American Family Radio and the AFA created AFRTalk, which focuses on Christian values and how they apply to daily life in states including Virginia, Mississippi, South Carolina and New Mexico. However, in 2009, AFA began streaming AFRTalk on the Internet adding to their quick establishment of Internet television programs such as Sky Angel IPTV and Home School Channel. The AFA has also successfully influenced television by petitioning NBC to cancel The Book of Daniel, a show that negatively portrayed the Christian faith. By effectively swaying Internet, television and radio stations to positively encourage the proliferation of Christian thought and scripture, the AFA has successfully not only gained supporters but has also promoted the positive aspects of Christianity to anyone and everyone.

The Case for Intelligent Design

Brief History of Christian Right’s Role

William Jennings Bryan first sparked the Christian Right’s involvement in education regarding evolution during the 1920s. The inclusion of Darwin’s theory sparked the Scopes Supreme Court case, which allowed the teaching of evolution in public schools across the country. Education and science textbooks have also stirred the Christian Right’s attempt to “influence the content of biology textbooks, criticizing what are considered inaccuracies and urging the inclusion of discussions of the weakness of evolution theory” (Utter and True, 105). The fight to modify public education was not
emphasized until the mid 1980s after the dismantling of the Moral Majority. Other organizations, including Concerned Women for America, Eagle Forum, the Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family, began to look at the issue once again and lobby local government and school boards to reexamine science textbooks and the teaching of evolution. Some worked on a national level, such as Citizens for Excellence in Education, while others worked on a local level to change education policy embodying the issue in terms of rights rather than religion.

Teaching evolution in public schools was first questioned in the 1925 Scopes Supreme Court trial, which ruled that Intelligent Design was an appropriate method of teaching. The subsequent Supreme Court trial regarding this issue occurred in 1968, known as Epperson v. Arkansas, which brought the teaching of evolution back into public schools. The most influential trial of the past decades, Edwards v. Arkansas (1987), declared that creationism was prohibited from public education in accordance with the Establishment Clause, which states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (trial, D). The Lemon Test, which “analyzes the constitutionality of the ID policy under the Establishment Clause,” as a result of Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971), (p.10) has since been used to determine whether or not an educational system violates the Establishment Clause based on three criteria, (1) it does not have a secular purpose; (2) its principal or primary effect advances or inhibits religion; or (3) it creates an excessive entanglement of the government with religion (p.90). Since parents trust public education to separate education and religious, it is the responsibility of the school board to comply. As a response to the 1987 Supreme Court decision, ID policy was instituted as a means of
teaching science specifically meant to incorporate a religious undertone incorporating that the divine created the complexities of nature.

“Stealth candidates,” a term coined by Ralph Reed in a 1992 *Los Angeles Times* interview, allowed the Christian Right to gain momentum in school boards during the early 1990s to spread the movement’s political agenda (Deckman, 83). Wilcox defines “stealth candidates” as those members of the Christian Right who campaigns while “hiding their ties with the organization” (Wilcox 2006, 38). Yet, Reed argued that “people know who we are, and they know what we were about,” which is why the opposition should not blame the Christian Right of the 1990s of stealthy maneuvers, especially regarding their sweeping school board success (Reed, 173). The media’s constant attention to the Christian Right illustrated that the “agenda was not so stealthy after all; it positioned us more in the political mainstream and proved that not all religious conservatives spoke with one voice” (Reed, 173). Christian Right activism transformed multiple times, yet the period of stealth candidates proved to be one of the most effective strategies.

Reed’s tactic not only permeated national politics, but also within local communities, especially schools board elections. By blending with non-conservatives, the “stealth candidates” proved successful in the early 1990s across the country. For example, in 1993 a group of conservative Christians decided to campaign for school board positions in Brooklyn. “Media attacks…[gave] this spontaneous grassroots protests the impetus for…inroads into urban politics,” resulting with “sixty percent of 130 pro-family candidates” winning “increasing the number of local school boards with conservative majorities from three to ten out of a total of thirty-two districts” (Reed, 172-
3). However, their strategy raised questions as to the legitimacy of their campaigns and how their religious views would shape the structure of education across the country. This victory prompted other pro-family conservatives in Vista, California, Lakeland, Florida, and a handful of other states to also organize successful school board campaigns.

In order to infiltrate school boards, Christian Right activists sought ordinary churchgoers to gain a strong alliance of supporters. To gain votes, "stealth candidates" may use conservative issues attractive conservatives. By limiting prophetic and Biblical language and advancing non-moral issues, Christian candidates were able to limit suspicion of their true motives. Internal support from Christian Right organizations benefits candidates. The Christian Coalition and Citizens for Excellence in Education "sponsored candidate training specifically targeted for school board elections" created to prepare individuals to be stealth candidates, according to Christian Right critics (Deckman, 106). Though organizations may prepare candidates, little evidence supports the assumption that "direct assistance from interest groups or political parties" support candidates before, during or after the campaign (Deckman, 118). However, the cost of a school board campaign is minimal and does not require such aid. Hence, infiltrating local politics is easier for individuals who identify with the Christian Right because they have the financial means necessary, as well as the appropriate personal contacts, to be active without the aid of larger institutions. The funding of political endeavors hurts the Christian Right because of an inability to compete with other political institutions on the national level.

*A Case Study – Dover Area School District Trial*
Three years before the trial, school board members chose Bonsell as president of the Dover Area School Board. Immediately, he pushed for the institution of school prayer and creationism into the public school’s curriculum. Debates regarding science textbooks were the focus of school board meetings from June until August of 2004. The Board desired Pandas to be a companion text to the ninth grade biology textbook, yet the teachers agreed that it could be used only as a reference book rather than a textbook. The school board meeting on October 7, 2004 did not include science teachers, but rather only the Board Curriculum Committee, which ultimately concluded that students must be made aware that Darwin’s theory is not factual, which was passed by the larger board on October 13, 2004. Six of the nine members of the school board elected through campaigns years prior, most of whom resigned soon after the completion of the trial, decided on October 18, 2004 that Darwin’s theory posed problems. They drafted a statement to be read by any student enrolled in a biology course on November 19, 2004 to jumpstart the new curriculum. The statement read as follows:

The Pennsylvania Academic Standards require students to learn about Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and eventually to take a standardized test of which evolution is a part. Because Darwin’s Theory is a theory, it continues to be tested as new evidence is discovered. The Theory is not a fact. Gaps in the Theory exist for which there is no evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations. Intelligent Design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin’s view. The reference book, Of Pandas and People, is available for students who might be interested in gaining an understanding of what Intelligent Design actually involves. With respect to any
theory, students are encouraged to keep an open mind. The school leaves the
discussion of the Origins of Life to individual students and their families. As a
Standards-driven district, class instruction focuses upon preparing students to
achieve proficiency on Standards-based assessments.

"Remarkably, the 6-3 vote at the October 18, 2004 meeting to approve the curriculum
change occurred with absolutely no discussion of the concept of ID, no discussion of how
presenting it to students would improve science education, and no justification was
offered by any Board member for the curriculum change" (p.120). Not all of the six
board members who voted for the change testified that they did not fully understand ID
policy or its religious base. During the series of school board meetings, only legal
analysts were questioned rather than expert scientists or any other sort of information that
would highlight the differences between evolution and creationism/ID policy.

In response to the School Board, the administration of the Dover High School read
a statement on January 2005 that disapproved the decision and adamantly proclaimed that
ID policy was not an acceptable scientific theory to be taught. On December 14, 2004,
parents of eleven students sued the Dover School District and the District Board of
Directors claiming that having the students read such a statement proclaiming an
Intelligent Design curriculum (ID Policy) was unconstitutional according to the first
amendment of the United States Constitution in addition to the Constitution
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The parents protested that the Dover School District
did not appropriately notify of the curriculum change.

The trial officially began on September 26, 2005 and lasted through November 4,
2005. United States District Judge John E. Jones III oversaw the trial. Initially, the
defense attempted to thoroughly explain the nature of ID policy and why it is a beneficial and explanatory method of teaching against that of evolution. Throughout the trial, expert witnesses testified that ID was a means of understanding how an intelligent creator developed nature, yet argued that ID policy never explicitly references god. Yet, the tone of expert witnesses of the defense eluded that ID policy served as a religious argument against Darwin's theory of evolution. Multiple testimonies were heard from ID policy contributors, including the author of Pandas, published by a Christian religious group. "Pandas indicates that there are two kinds of causes, natural and intelligent, which demonstrate that intelligent causes are beyond nature" (p.30). The most compelling argument that ID policy is religiously motivated is found in the Wedge Document drafted by the Discovery Institute's Center for Renewal of Science and Culture, states a desire to abolish science and replace it with "theistic and Christian Science" (p. 29).

In response, the plaintiffs reiterated the 1987 Supreme Court decision that prohibited teaching intelligent design as science. The plaintiffs also highlighted that "creationism" was replaced with "intelligent design" as a means of disregarding the 1987 ruling, which expert witnesses for the defense failed to dispute. In addition, it was argued that students knew the difference between a theory of evolution and a theory of religiously motivated education that was clearly unconstitutional. The trial continued with testimonies to decide whether or not the ID policy was a form of science, concluding, "ID is an interesting theological argument, but that it is not science" (p. 89). The court declared that the "Board Curriculum Committee knew as early as June 2004 that ID was widely considered by numerous observers to be a form of creationism" and that it was not "coincidental that...some form of creationism was precisely what the
Committee wanted to inject into Dover’s science classrooms” (p. 107). A signed check for sixty copies of Pandas was anonymously donated to the District, later to be attributed to the families of Bonsell and Buckingham. Lying during depositions and under oath, it was clear that Bonsell and Buckingham were attempting to hide their true devotion to the teaching of ID/creationism over evolution.

It was concluded that the teachers only accepted buying Pandas to ensure that the regular biology textbooks would be purchased for the upcoming year as the primary text for the students. School Board minutes did not include any discussion of intelligent design, yet did reference creationism during the six-month battle between the school board curriculum committee and the science teachers. “The unrebuted evidence reveals that the teachers had to make unnecessary sacrifices and compromises advantageous toward Board members, who were steadfastly working to inject religion in the classroom, so that their students would have a biology textbook that should have been approved as a matter of course” (p.120). The 6 to 3 decision to pass the ID policy in October 2004 was not easily passed, yet Bonsell and Buckingham’s desire to push for creationism outweighed everyone’s opposition.

All testified that Bonsell and Buckingham were the masterminds behind the incorporation of the ID policy due to their adamant beliefs regarding the theory of evolution versus creationism. The defendants attempted to cover their true agenda by arguing that their only goal was to provide a more balanced explanation of science within a secular educational system, yet as evidence clearly showed this was far from the truth. The court found that the School Board Committee did not obey the Establishment Clause as well as the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Constitution based on their desire to
incorporate religious sentiments into a secular public school education.

Though he may be the current Dover Area School Board president, Bryan Rehm’s personal experience with the Dover School Board began before the controversial trial erupted. As a physics teacher at a school within the jurisdiction of the Dover Area School Board, Mr. Rehm first encountered the Christian undertones of the school boards in 2001. As a student in 1987 during the Edwards trial, Rehm knew that school board had the potential to go against their legal rights and institute curriculum changes underhandedly. Rehm initially believed the Dover situation to be a replay of the Edwards trial, yet quickly realized that Bonsell and Buckingham truly desired to implement intelligent design as the only form of science taught within all schools governed by the Dover School Board. Attempting to stop the school board along with the entire science department, Rehm realized that it was going to take a mass group of opponents to defeat the Christian school board members “poor governance.” Belligerent to teachers, parents, and students, the school board only cared about money that fed their own Christian political agenda. Forced to watch videos that claimed evolutionary scientists were wrong and that their own teaching was based on lies, the science departments knew controversy was lurking. Additionally, Rehm remembers the school board holding the order of new textbooks, which focused on evolution, requested by the faculty prior to the speculation of a curriculum change. Though Rehm taught the big bang theory in his physics courses and evolution in his environmental science class, the school board was solely focused on the biology curriculum, yet he knew that would not last long.

Bonsell and Buckingham publicly challenged other school board members in addition to the faculty and teachers. According to Judge Jones in an interview from The
York Dispatch released on December 21, 2005, Bonsell and Buckingham stealthy crafted their plan to implement intelligent design. Specifically, Jones believed that “one unfortunate theme...is the striking ignorance concerning the concept of ID amongst board members” (Sulon, 2005). As a teacher, Rehm believed that Bonsell and Buckingham were so successful at first because of the faculty and parent’s ignorance. Rehm felt that Bonsell and Buckingham were effective in the initial stages of their efforts because they did not keep their intentions a secret, but rather vocally pushed teachers to the point that everyone noticed but did not act for almost three years. Rather, Rehm believes that Bonsell and Buckingham were successful because their intentions were “underhanded and did not follow the right course of action” (Sulon, 2005). Since the school board does not have legal authority to change curriculum, but rather only the right to either reject or accept proposed curriculums from teachers, their course of action was illegal.

By vocally expressing their desire to promote intelligent design, Bonsell and Buckingham focused their argument on the belief that “the country wasn’t founded on Muslim beliefs [and] evolution,” but rather that American “was founded on Christianity, and our students out to be taught as such” (Sulon, 2005). Replacing the term “creationism” with “intelligent design” allowed Bonsell and Buckingham to minimize the new curriculum’s emphasis on religion and focus their attention on an alternative method of education. According to a series of news articles after the conclusion of the trial in 2005, many school board members indicated that they did not feel threatened by the agenda of Bonsell and Buckingham. For example, Assistant Superintendent Michael Baksa “testified that he once heard Buckingham use the word creationism, and that he
‘surprised to hear it’ according to an October 29, 2005 article in the Patriot News. Rather, board member Heather Greesey testified that the school board referenced the curriculum change as one of “intelligent design” (Sulon, 2005). Since many who testified had conflicting stories, the Board minutes were later examined and it determined that the term “creationism” was used much more than some remembered. If Bonsell and Buckingham did phrase the curriculum change as one with a religious undertone, which creationism encompasses, the other school board members and parents would not have endorsed such a change. Therefore, it seems that Bonsell and Buckingham were initially successful because they manipulated the wording just enough from the right people to surreptitiously hide their actual agenda and promote their illegal curriculum change.

During the trial, Buckingham was hesitant to respond to questions from the opposing party. Though Buckingham denied accusations of promoting a religious agenda, he did validate accusations that he believed his Christian faith substantially influenced the type of school board he wanted to run. The York Dispatch released an article on October 28, 2005 revealing that Bonsell and Buckingham were endorsing the anonymous purchasing of Pandas and People with funding “from members of his own church” deemed as “disingenuous” and “game-playing” by the article (Hicks, 2005). Additionally, columnist Larry Hicks notes that Buckingham’s unclear and conflicting answers during his testimony proved “that from the very beginning, it was all about introducing Christianity into the classroom” (Hicks, 2005). Buckingham and Bonsell may have easily crept into power because through manipulation and word choice, yet their downfall was inevitable as they were unable to substantiate any of their actions with accurate testimonies.
At this point, Rehm took the opportunity to resign from his teaching position and "challenge them" in the coming November school board elections. Though Rehm accepted a teaching position within another school district, he was still tied to the Dover School District because his children attended the schools within their jurisdiction. Rehm highlighted one instance when he met with the superintendent during an elementary school event in 2004. Rehm inquired whether the science curriculum change would occur, but was assured not to worry and a significant change was not going to occur. By December 2004, parents and teachers, including Rehm, formalized a campaign to overtake the school board while the trial commenced because it was "necessary" to ensure the teaching of factual science. Though the trial and campaign coincided, Rehm and his supporters challenged every seat on the school board and successfully replaced 8 of the 9 seats during the first term. Though Rehm did not campaign for the presidential position, as rules state the school board members choose the specified positions, his knowledge and experience provided him with the necessary skills to take on such a task.

As president, Rehm "tries not to focus on the evolution issue but keep it in mind of how not to do things." Rehm claims the previous school board mistreated science, misunderstood the relationship between religion and science, and handled the repercussions of their actions inappropriately. Additionally, they preached that America "was a country based on Christian principles" and anything that disputed that conception was based on lies. Rehm orchestrates the current school board using "good governance" by complying with state and federal constitutional laws, holding public forums allowing open discussion of any and all rational issues that are supported by facts rather than
Christian scripture as a form of validation. Though good governance “does not mean that you always get your way,” it is about balancing everyone’s concerns equally and fairly. The Dover Area School District has moved past the trial and the debate for the most part, however Rehm and the current board must still handle the repercussions of the financial issues caused by the trial. By stabilizing public debate and comments regarding the trial, a number of issues that lingered after the trial have since diminished. The parents and school board members who supported the replacement of evolution by intelligent design did initially try to take back the board, yet to no avail because residents of York County knew what these evangelical Christians hoped for, yet the majority “wanted it to go away and pretend it never happened.” As of today, the trial is a “dead issue” in Dover and does not show signs of returning. There are no formal intelligent design resources located within the classrooms or classes that include intelligent design as part of the curriculum, though there is a section of the library with resources for anyone who is curious. Since the plaintiffs did not contest the study of intelligent design in a social studies setting where including religious beliefs was appropriate, there is one course currently offered that does discuss intelligent design. A comparative religion course that discusses religions as social movements includes a section regarding evolution versus intelligent design. Rehm noted that science teachers feel that they are teaching evolution with more enthusiasm and conviction than ever before to make sure that such a dispute never happens again.

Though the Dover case strictly regarded a specific, localized school district, Rehm felt that the court’s ruling transcended across the state and even the country. Since the case was heard in Pennsylvania’s middle district court system, the ruling legally binds
only the schools within that particular area. However, Rehm emphasized that the judge based his ruling on federal Supreme Court decisions. To expand the recognition of the Dover case would have cost millions of school dollars, exceeding the two million already spent. Though Rehm would have liked to the case to be presented to the federal Supreme Court, good governance outweighed the positives of pushing the trail beyond Pennsylvania and the controversy settled. It is the “responsibility of the school board and the responsibility of the citizens and the public” to ensure that school board members are following the state and federal laws. Rehm does not believe that amendments to the state or national constitution would prevent such issues because “there is nothing illegal about teaching bad science.”

From 2001 until the judge’s final ruling in 2005, the Dover Area School Board pushed the teachers, parents and students to accept their alternative agenda based upon a “fundamentalist conservative viewpoint,” which did not only include science education. Rehm remembers their desire to prevent homosexuals from attending or working for the district as well as institute abstinence only courses. The previous board’s manipulation was “underhanded and did not follow the right course of action” in regards to their lack of respect of the laws set forth by the state. It is illegal for a school board within Pennsylvania to rewrite classroom curriculums. Rather, it is only their legal right to accept or reject curriculum changes which teachers present to the board. However, by distracting parents with a high school building project, Rehm claims that the school board’s “alternative agenda” lasted as long as it did because it “comes down that voters did not do their homework and did not take the time to investigate the candidates.” The previous school board used manipulation to try and transition the Dover Area School
District to be based upon Christian traditionalist beliefs was not only illegal, but also unjust.

**Conclusion**

**Case Study Analysis**

Abortion, homosexuality, and the fight to implement an intelligent design curriculum in public schools may only be three of the many issues that the Christian Right has attempted to influence over the past thirty years. Yet, the Christian Right's increased political participation in regards to these three specific case studies can be generalized to other issues they seek to politically influence, such as stem cell research, euthanasia, public prayer and civil rights. Various methods to infiltrate the political realm have proved beneficial on the local level in order to influence public opinion, policy formation, and electoral campaigns. Direct communication with congressmen and the public has allowed the Christian Right to gain support. For instance, the National Right has not only used the Internet and direct mailings to gain support, but also attend state and national conventions and rallies to promote the pro-life agenda. Organizations, such as the National Right to Life, have educated Americans that directly communication with congressmen is crucial to the continuation of the movement. As the National Right to Life has over 3,000 state and county affiliates across the United States, it has sought to infiltrate politics from every direction since influencing public opinion then allows for certain political figures to be elected and then attempt to write or overturn public policies that do not align with conservative ideology.

Mat Jordan, the president of The York County Pennsylvanian's for Human Life, has taken responsibility of informing and educating public opinion, policy formation and
electoral success for the past ten years. On a local level, Jordan has used various tactics in promoting his pro-life agenda to others. Lending himself as a resource in addition to his traveling campaign to various county fairs and events annually, Jordan has found that face-to-face interactions is the most effective method to change public opinion and lobby government officials. Specifically limiting his pro-life campaign to a particular county, Jordan’s work emphasizes the unique method of influence that the Christian Right first adopted in the late 1980s during Robertson and Reed’s era. By localizing his efforts through a bottom-top system rather than a top-down system, Jordan feels he has successfully influenced a majority of York county residents so that they can then influence others beyond his reach, especially family and friends not living in York County. Every year, more people approach him seeking information regarding abortion. As more people want the facts and statistics on abortion that Jordan provides, the more willing they are to understand the negatives of abortion and why it should be completely outlawed. Jordan continues to organize events that promote the pro-life agenda as he has devoted his life talking to people, lobbying politicians and petitioning legislations that support abortion. Though his efforts may be confined to York County, Jordan’s efforts have not gone unforeseen by residents and for him that is success.

Affiliated with the National Right to Life, Mat Jordan has constructed his pro-life chapter to influence the hearts and minds of Pennsylvania residents and congressmen. He is one of the many chapter presidents led by National Right to Life delegate Denise Wilcox. Through the establishment of thousands of chapters across the county, including Jordan’s York County organization, Wilcox emphasizes the importance of first influencing face-to-face on the local level in order to educate and inform residents how
and when to lobby congressmen to overturn legislations against their pro-life agenda. Addressing key issues, Wilcox espouses the importance of localities and personal connections with pro-life supporters in order to transform American into the conservative nation she desires. Though there is much work to be done, her belief that the pro-life movement has now shifted into the hands of the youth is crucial to further the progress of the movement. As the Christian Right leaders of the 1980s and 1990s are getting older, Wilcox stresses the importance of seeking younger conservatives to continue the success of the past. Dr. Wilcox, who attended the past National March to Life in 2010, testified that there were an overwhelmingly large number of younger women than past years. A shift to younger advocates will allow the continuation of old, traditional values to continue thriving and influencing American politics.

Diane Gramley, the president of the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Family Association, methodically approaches her campaign against gay rights and same-sex marriage using the same mentality as Mat Jordan and Denise Wilcox. Her emphasis on educating and informing specific localities and specific government officials illustrates the Christian Rights tactic to first permeate the local level in order to have a greater affect nationally. Approaching Pennsylvania residents with an agenda strictly based on Judeo-Christian scripture and traditional values, Gramley’s organization cannot endorse political candidates, however does seek to lobby for or against candidates who will aid her own work to transform citizens back into scripture abiding Christian Americans. Gramley, in addition to Jordan and Wilcox, understands the importance of creating a strong supporter base in order to infiltrate the political realm as deep and as long as possible. Though she cannot endorse political candidates, Gramley influences others to
do so through mailings and conferences in order gain support and networks within the political arena as she tries to impede political candidates who do not hold conservative beliefs from holding political positions. Additionally, she informs the public when elected officials that ran on conservative platforms are not following through with campaign promises to outlaw practices such as abortion and homosexuality. Exposing politicians is one of the many ways Gramley tries to reform American politics, and she continues to find other methods to persuade others.

As the Dover Area School Boards seeks to recover from the past ten years of political turmoil it has endured, current school board president Bryan Rehm has experienced the evolution versus intelligent design debate since he was a student. Though Rehm must continue to pay the debt of the Dover trial, he has established stability. Rehm’s experience with Christian Right activists seeking to influence the school board illustrates how important localities are to the social movement. By permeating local school boards through stealth campaigns, Christian activists not only have the ability to alter curriculum, but to also attempt to sway parents, students and faculty to support the institution of ID policy. By approaching issues on a personal level, the Christian Right has utilized school boards to fulfill their political agenda. Though the Dover trial proved that the Christian Right activists were constitutionally unjust in their actions, the judge’s decision does not diminish the fact that they were able to be elected onto the board and had the ability to even stir a debate. Though Rehm may have halted the Christian Right efforts in Dover, Pennsylvania, the Christian Right has had success on the local level. Understanding why the Christian Right activists on the school board pushed their Christian scripture based curriculum to the brink of success before parents
and faculty realized the magnitude and potential of their power. School boards are one of the best options for Christian Right activists because their morally based agenda can proceed unnoticed and unopposed until it is almost too late to stop.

Significance of Findings

Based upon these three specific case studies, it can be generalized that Christian Right activists across the country have sought to influence American politics on the local level in order to be successful. Jordan, Wilcox, Gramley and Rehm’s statements verify that Christian Right activism must first start at the local level in order to educate and inform the right people with the right facts. In accordance with past surveys and case studies, such as those that Green, Wilcox and Rozell provide in their ongoing series observing the Christian Right, it is clear that the Christian Right remains a strong social movement with a particular political agenda.

Literature expressing the political significance of the Christian Right may take various points of view, yet the extent of their progress on the local level cannot be overlooked. Based upon the testimonies of the interviewees, it is clear that Christian Right activists feel that their efforts to influence elections, public opinion and public policy have increased substantially on the local level in hopes to one day also overturn national legislation as well. However, the Christian Right will need even more support and funds to transcend county lines. For example, the efforts of Jordan and Wilcox on behalf of the pro-life movement have targeted small localities in order to directly communicate with residents. By doing so, they believe to have influenced more residents substantiated by the levels of supporters at pro-life events and rallies such as county fairs and national marches. Bryan Rehm not only noticed the power of the Christian Right on
the local level while working for the Dover Area School District both as a teacher and president of the school board, but also mentioned that he remembered the 1987 Supreme Court trial that addressed evolution versus creationism. Diane Gramley may seek to gain supporters solely on the local level, however these local efforts educate and inform voters through mailings and events regarding which candidates are most aligned with conservative ideology. These examples are specifically directed to localities because the Christian Right has experienced the most success on the local level. The Christian Right has yet to overturn Roe v. Wade or nationally institute prayer in schools, yet they have been able to outlaw gay marriage in particular states and make it more difficult to have late term abortions. For now, the Christian Right must continue working on a grassroots level in order to push their political agenda as much as possible, even if it may not go beyond the community level.

These findings are significant because of their relevance to current political issues being discussed among Americans. Since the Democratic success in Washington D.C, the Christian Right must be willing to shift tactics yet again in order to meet the demands of the public, yet still maintain their conservative political agenda. Understanding the patterns of the Christian Right is necessary in order to understand shifts in American politics, as they have been one of the strongest social movements of the twentieth century. Though the Christian Right may wax and wane from the political scene nationally, their ongoing fight on the local level has legitimized their desire and ability to continue fighting for their conservative based nation.

*Future Influence*
It is unlikely that Christian Right activists will fade from the political scene. Their ability to restructure organizations as public policy, public opinion and campaigns tactics change, are incredibly beneficial to the Christian Right’s survival as one of the most successful social movements of the past thirty years. Nationally, the Christian Right continues to seek out conservative candidates to replace the liberal majority currently leading our country, in addition to holding events and protests on the local level in hopes of eventual success on the national level.

The Christian Right has demonstrated an uncanny ability to transition its organizations and supporters to uphold their political agenda. In order to maintain that stability, the Christian Right must continue to facilitate personal interactions in order to educate and inform American citizens of the importance of a Christian nation based upon scripture and traditional values. Though America is diverse culturally, religiously and ethnically, the Christian Right continues to argue that America was founded upon Christian’s ideals and must continue to pursue that mentality politically and culturally. The Christian Right is not only transforming American politics, but also the hearts and minds of American citizens. Though the Christian Right may wax and wane from the political arena, their potential to thrive and succeed cannot be underestimated at the local level and the national level as the social movement continues to gain support.
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