



## INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA THE INFORMER

A biblical, prophetic look at current events for those who have a heart to pray for our nation.

### On Watch in Washington

November 30, 2011

#### **WEAK ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR STATE BUDGETING**

With a weak economic picture unfolding many states are facing a very challenging budget crunch.

Things have improved since the worst of the recession, but [states still face a dire fiscal situation](#), according to a report to be released Tuesday by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the [National Association of State Budget Officers](#) (NASBO).

High unemployment and an aging population is cause for tighter controls on spending by states.

The good news is that “state budgets are certainly improving; however, growth is weak, and there is not enough money for all the bills coming in,” said NASBO Executive Director Scott Pattison. “State officials will still be cutting some programs, and increases in funding for any program except for health care will be rare.”

The report says that Medicaid, the combined federal-state health program for the poor and the disabled, will place the biggest budgetary burden on states. Because of increasing caseloads, declining federal help and spiraling health-care costs, state Medicaid spending is growing much faster than state revenue, crowding out funding for other priorities.

[Medicaid is burdening the states with financial liabilities of hundreds of billions of dollars](#). Already Obamacare is making this problem far worse through its “maintenance of effort” clause, which forbids states from tightening their eligibility requirements even as their economies shrink.

And beginning in 2014, the states will be responsible for administering a Medicaid expansion: All families earning up to 133 percent of the poverty level will become eligible. An estimated 17 million more patients will flood the program. Even though services for these patients will be financed primarily by the federal government (over 90 percent of the long-term costs), the administrative costs (billions of dollars per state) will not be.

The federal government had provided extra Medicaid help to states as part of the stimulus program. But that help has ended, prompting states to increase their Medicaid spending by an average of 29 percent this fiscal year, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Many states have streamlined their Medicaid programs in an effort to control costs. Still, officials in more than half of the states said in a recent survey that there is an even chance that their Medicaid programs will face a budget shortfall as enrollment continues to increase.

Officials say the fiscal pressure that Medicaid puts on states is expected to increase when the federal health-care overhaul takes effect in 2014. Although the federal government is required to pick up the costs for people newly eligible for the program, many who are now eligible but not enrolled are expected to be drawn in, and states must shoulder part of those costs.

States are also struggling to meet the needs of local governments. Many states cut aid to localities during the recession, and many of them want it restored.

“Local governments are still seeing declines in their revenues, because even if property values have stabilized, property taxes tend to follow a couple years behind,” said Dan Crippen, the NGA’s executive director. “Property taxes are coming in much lower for school districts and cities and counties.”

The report says that although state general fund revenue increased in 2011 and is expected to increase 2012, it remains \$21 billion below 2008 levels. In addition, states are bracing for further reductions in federal aid that are likely to come from Washington’s efforts to slow the growth of the deficit.

The fiscal pressure on states has become a drag on the job market; local and state governments are shedding jobs, even though the private-sector job market has shown signs of improvement.

State and local governments have cut 455,000 jobs since the beginning of 2010, and public-sector jobs account for the smallest share of the nation’s employment since the 2008 financial crisis, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. (Source: [National Review](#), [NASBO](#), [Washington Post](#))

*“Behold, You desire truth in the inner being; make me therefore to know wisdom in my inmost heart.” (Psalm 51:6)*

**Ask the Lord to give His wisdom to our state legislators. The Lord is the supplier of our every need and He will hear from Heaven and answer us. Pray that the Lord will give wisdom to our leaders to make sound economic decisions for the betterment of each of our independent states. The Lord has revealed Himself as our “Jehovah Jireh” – our provider.**

### **TROOP WITHDRAWAL DATE FROM AFGHANISTAN SET**

The United States is pulling out the most — 33,000 by the end of 2012. That’s one-third of 101,000 American troops who were in Afghanistan in June — the peak of U.S. military presence in the war, according to figures provided by the Pentagon.

Others in the 49-nation coalition have announced withdrawal plans too, even as they insist they are not rushing to leave. Many nations have vowed to keep troops in Afghanistan to continue training the Afghan police and army in the years to come. And many have pledged to keep sending aid to the impoverished country after the international combat mission ends in 2014.

The exit is making Afghans nervous.

About 14,000 foreign troops will withdraw by the end of December, according to an Associated Press review of more than a dozen nations’ drawdown plans. The United States is pulling out 10,000 service members this year; Canada withdrew 2,850 combat forces this summer; France and Britain will each send about 400 home; Poland is recalling 200; and Denmark and Slovenia are pulling out about 120 combined. (Contributor: [Associated Press](#) )

*“I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” (Psalm 4:8)*

**Pray that the people of Afghanistan will seek the Lord for His hand of protection. Pray that the U.S. troops now in Afghanistan will be used to bear witness of the goodness and truth that the Lord Jesus has for these people. Pray that God's wisdom will be revealed and that their eyes will be opened to the blessings that God has for those who call upon His name for salvation, just as it was in the days of old Nineveh.**

### **SENATE DEMOCRATS MOVE TO REPEAL DOMA**

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted 10-8 along party lines in favor for the Respect for Marriage Act, a bill that favors sinful and God forbidden homosexual unions.

Committee Republicans, [noting that the bill faces bleak prospects for passing the full Congress](#) thankfully, said the measure was a waste of time and the matter should be left up to the states.

Texas Sen. John Cornyn, chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, argued that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) would never bring such a controversial bill to the floor, particularly during the 2012 campaign cycle that could determine control of the Senate.

"Were he to schedule a vote on this bill before the next election, he would face a revolution in his own caucus," Cornyn said of Reid.

Added Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, the committee's ranking Republican: "To me, this debate is about stable families, good environments for raising children and religious beliefs."

"It's not about discriminating against anyone," he added.

Feinstein acknowledged after the hearing that she didn't have the 60 votes needed to override a filibuster on the Senate floor, nor has she spoken to Reid about the bill. But she noted that Thursday's vote was a "big first step" and shot down the GOP's notion that some moderate Democrats may be fearful of a vote to repeal DOMA. Supporters of this repeal attempt in the Senate may feel the results in short lived Senate terms when the dust settles, and the populous gets a full understanding of what has just been attempted. The populous overwhelmingly sides with the DOMA bill already in place.

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was [overwhelmingly passed in 1996](#), by a whopping margin of 85-14 in the United States Senate and by an equally overwhelming margin in the United States House of Representatives by a margin of 342-67.

All Republicans on the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to defend the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) by voting **NO** on the so-called "Respect for Marriage Act of 2011" last week. On the other hand, All 10 Democrat Senators on the Senate Judiciary Committee voted for the so-called "Respect for Marriage Act of 2011" which will eliminate DOMA. (Contributor: [POLITICO](#), [Christian Coalition of America](#))

*"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup> In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error." (Romans 1:26)*

**Pray that the righteous leadership in the Senate and the House of Representatives remain strong and stand strong for the Word of God and moral decency which brings life and wholeness to a nation.**

## **MILLIONS OF NETWORK PRINTERS OPEN TO HACKING**

Could a hacker from half-way around the planet control your printer and give it instructions so frantic that it could eventually catch fire? Or use a hijacked printer as a copy machine for criminals, making it easy to commit identity theft or even take control of entire networks that would otherwise be secure?

It's not only possible, but likely, [say researchers at Columbia University](#), who claim they've discovered a new class of computer security flaws that could impact millions of businesses, consumers, and even government agencies.

Printers can be remotely controlled by computer criminals over the Internet, with the potential to steal personal information, attack otherwise secure networks and even cause physical damage, the researchers argue in a vulnerability warning first reported by [msnbc.com](#). They say there's no easy fix for the flaw they've identified in some Hewlett-Packard LaserJet printer lines – and perhaps on other firms' printers, too – and there's no way to tell if hackers have already exploited it.

The researchers, who have working quietly for months in an electronics lab under a series of government and industry grants, described the flaw in a private briefing for federal agencies two weeks ago. They told Hewlett-Packard about it last week.

A hacker who merely wanted to wreak havoc could easily disable thousands – or perhaps millions – of vulnerable printers, Cui said, as it is trivial to send the printer upgrades that would render it inoperable. (Contributor: [MSNBC](#))

*"He will not let your foot slip--he who watches over you will not slumber." (Psalm 121:3)*

**Give thanks to the Lord that there are those with sensitivity to discover potential abuses of privacy. Ask the Lord to give these technicians wisdom in how to deal with this potential threat to privacy.**

## **MOSLEM RALLY VOWS TO "KILL ALL JEWS"**

Organizers at Cairo's iconic al-Azhar Mosque warn against "Judaization of Jerusalem."

A Moslem Brotherhood rally in Cairo last Friday at the Sunni world's most prestigious center of learning turned into a call for genocide, with protesters pledging to "one day kill all Jews."

Eldad Beck, [Ynet's Arab affairs correspondent, reported from Cairo that some 5,000 people attended the rally at al-Azhar Mosque](#), convened to coincide with the anniversary of the approval of the 1947 UN Partition Plan for Palestine.

The event, organizers said, was aimed at rallying Egyptians behind the "battle against Jerusalem's Judaization."

Speakers at the demonstration condemned "Zionist occupiers" and "treacherous Jews," and organizers distributed maps of the Old City highlighting areas where "Zionists are aiming to change Jerusalem's Moslem character."

Muhammad Ahmed el- Tayeb, the imam of al-Azhar Mosque, told the crowd: "Al- Aksa Mosque is currently under an offensive by the Jews... We shall not allow the Zionists to Judaize al-Quds [Jerusalem]. We are telling Israel and Europe that we shall not allow even one stone to be moved there."

Protesters chanted, "[Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv: Judgment Day has come](#)," and passages from the Koran vowing that "one day we shall kill all the Jews."

Al-Azhar Mosque is part of al-Azhar University, a millennium- old compound in central Cairo that is the world's leading center of Arabic literature and Sunni jurisprudence.

Beck quoted an elementary school teacher outside the mosque telling him, "All Egyptian Moslems are willing to embark on jihad for the sake of Palestine."

"Why is the U.S. losing in Afghanistan?" he asked.

"Because the other side is willing and wants to die. We have a different mentality than that of the Americans and Jews."

Meanwhile, late last week, Egypt's Youm7 newsweekly reported that the Brotherhood's spiritual leader, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, had returned to Cairo for the first time since his dramatic return in February from a half-century in exile. The immensely popular television preacher arrived at Cairo Airport on Wednesday "to follow the incidents in Tahrir Square," the center of anti-government protests. (Contributors: [Ynet News](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

*"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure." (Psalm 122:6)*

*"If I forget you, O Jerusalem, May my right hand forget her skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth If I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom. The day of Jerusalem, who said, 'Raze it, raze it to its very foundation.' O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, how blessed will be the one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us. How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock." (Psalm 137)*

**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.**

### **HOME OWNERSHIP DECLINE**

If homeownership is the American dream, [that dream is slipping away](#) -- and more rapidly in Florida and in Southwest Florida than across the nation.

Home prices across the nation are now [right back where they were at the beginning of 2003](#). All that was gained is largely now lost, and the effect on home ownership could continue for decades.

"Consumer attitudes have gotten a lot more negative about long-term commitment," said Standard and Poors' David Blitzer, after reporting home prices through September had fallen a deeper-than-expected 3.9 percent compared to the third quarter of 2010. "They dropped to new lows. This takes them below the point we saw in 2009, where briefly we all thought this thing was about to turn around."

And that's the problem.

Every time we think things are turning around in the housing market, we get hit with some new problem, like last year's so-called "robo-signing" foreclosure paperwork scandal, which managed to stall the cleansing of distress in the market for over a year. Now that foreclosures are ramping up again, prices are coming down again.

All this could push home ownership down to levels not seen at least since before the Census began tracking this data in 1963.

[Nationally, 65.4 percent of households own their home](#), down from 67.3 percent, according to the 2010 American Community Survey, the U.S. Census Bureau's annual survey of 2 million households.

Home ownership soared to 70 percent in 2005, but it could fall to 62 percent by 2015, according to the number crunchers at John Burns Real Estate Consulting. They suggest that the effect of foreclosures drops home ownership 5.6 percent, and cyclical trends, like poor consumer confidence, tightening mortgage credit and the weak economy drop it 3 percent. Positive demographic trends would only offset that by 0.7 percent.

"People's memories take a while to fade," says John Burns. "It [also] takes a while to rebuild your balance sheet after a recession, and that's what many people need to do before they buy homes again. Homeowners need to build back up to have a down payment for their next house, and renters will need to save more than before to become homeowners."

Burns believes home ownership will return by 2025 to around 67 percent, as previously foreclosed borrowers return to the housing market, cyclical trends improve and positive demographics start to carry more weight.

One thing Burns doesn't mention, though, is negative equity, or borrowers who owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth.

"It's not just negative equity that we often focus on, but it's also insufficient equity. All the people who have those primary loans that are somewhere between 80 and 100 percent LTV (loan-to-value) also basically don't have access to the credit markets," notes Mark Flemming of CoreLogic, which today reported negative equity at 22.1 percent of all homes with a mortgage at the end of the third quarter.

As home prices refuse to stabilize, and in fact continue to fall, negative equity will only increase. The vast majority of the ten plus million people who are underwater are still paying their mortgages, but they are deeply underwater, 30 percent and higher. That will take a long time to correct, and will stagnate much of the market for years to come, as these owners are unable to sell.

"The younger buyer is a little more cautious because they've grown up in that environment, thinking maybe they should wait just a little bit more, save just a little bit more," Bruno said.

Which leaves us to ask, is a 62 percent home ownership rate so bad? It's still far higher than in most European countries. Why is home ownership so intrinsic to the "American Dream?" I'll leave that to you faithful readers to discuss. (Contributors: [CNBC](#), [Herald Tribune](#))

*"I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble." (Psalm 59:16)*

**Pray that the Lord will grant His wisdom for housing and shelter to all families in the U.S. Pray that our nation will rest in the provisions that the Lord provides. Ask the Lord to give wisdom to the officials in finance. Pray that they will discover creative means to allow more families to have security with home ownership.**

#### **AIR FORCE ACADEMY ADAPTS TO PAGANS, DRUIDS, WITCHES, AND WICANS**

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Their ranks are slim. According to the academy's enrollment records, only three of 4,300 cadets identified themselves as pagans, followers of an ancient religion that generally does not worship a single god and considers all things in nature interconnected. Still, the academy this year dedicated an \$80,000 outdoor worship center - a small Stonehenge-like circle of boulders with propane fire pit - high on a hill for the handful of current or future cadets whose religions fall under the broad category of "Earth-based." Those include pagans, Wiccans, druids, witches and followers of Native American faiths.

Two spiritual leaders for all Earth-based religions - one a civilian, one an Air Force reservist - are witches and regularly cast spells, which they say is not so different from offering prayer . . . In addition to providing worship space, new policy dictates that all cadets take courses in understanding the religions of those who may someday fall under their command. Recently Chaplain Maj. Darren Duncan, branch chief of cadet faith communities has fielded calls from West Point and Annapolis about replicating the Air Force's efforts. ([LA Times](#))

*"Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings . . . Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you."* (Jeremiah 25:5, 6)

**Pray to our Heavenly Father, tell Him that we are grieved beyond measure that these things are taking place in our military - the ones who are entrusted to defend us. Bit by bit our military and nation is being compromised by these evil cults. Speak to the Lord and ask for repentant hearts for our military leaders. Seek forgiveness for allowing false cult gods to take root in our culture. Pray that a loud protest in our nation would rise and quash this abomination of serving false gods and idols.**

### **CHRISTMAS TREE NOT HOLIDAY TREE**

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker said Monday that the evergreen decorated with ornaments and adorned with a star in the center of Wisconsin's Capitol Rotunda is a Christmas tree, not a holiday tree as it's been called for the past 25 years.

The roughly 30-foot-tall tree was called a Christmas tree from the first display in 1916 until 1985. That's when politicians bowed to concerns about government endorsing religion and started referring to it as a holiday tree.

The Madison-based Freedom From Religion Foundation has opposed the term Christmas tree, saying it offends nonreligious people and amounts to a government endorsement of Christianity. .

Walker, in a press release, downplayed any potential controversy by simply referring to the decoration as a Christmas tree and not noting any change. His spokesman Cullen Werwie confirmed that the designation and change from past practices was intentional.

"It's a Christmas tree," Werwie said. "In all honesty, I don't know what more to say about it." (Source: Capitol Hill Prayer Partners, [The Chicago Tribune](#))

### **PRAYER FOCUS ON CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES**

**Advocate for the inclusion of prayer in the tenth anniversary commemoration of the September 11th attacks.** Congressman Forbes, Founder and Co-Chairman of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, sent a [letter](#) to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg urging him to include prayer in the

commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the September 11th attacks. Congressman Mike McIntyre, Co-Chairman of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, lead 31 Members of Congress in sending a [letter](#) to Mayor Bloomberg echoing the call for the inclusion of prayer.

**Working to reaffirm our national motto, “In God We Trust”** - Congressman Forbes, Chairman of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, introduced [H.Con.Res.13](#) to reaffirm our national motto “In God We Trust,” and to encourage its display in public buildings, public schools, and other government institutions. The legislation was passed favorably out of the House Judiciary Committee on March 17, 2011, and is awaiting a vote by the full House of Representatives.

**Fighting attempts to remove “Under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance.** Members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus lead in sending a [letter](#) to NBC, expressing concern over the network’s omissions of “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance twice in a video montage aired during coverage of the U.S. Open. In [response](#) to the letter sent by 108 Members of Congress, the network reprimanded the employees responsible for the omissions and implemented safeguards to prevent similar instances in the future.

**Oppose efforts to remove a memorial cross honoring military veterans.** In January 2011, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that a cross displayed at the Mount Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego, California was unconstitutional. Members of the Prayer Caucus signed on to an *amicus curiae* brief submitted to the Ninth Circuit in *Jewish War Veterans of the United States v. City of San Diego*, asking the full court to reconsider the case, and asserting that the cross’s presence at the veterans memorial is constitutional.

**Urge religious freedom protections for service members.** The repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy in the military raised concerns that service members whose consciences or religious beliefs conflicted with homosexual behavior would face discrimination and disapproval. Members of the Prayer Caucus sent a [letter](#) to President Obama, urging that specific religious freedom and conscience protections be adopted during implementation of the repeal to formally assure all Americans that our citizens need not leave their faith at home when they volunteer to serve.

**Affirm America’s rich spiritual heritage.** Co-chairmen of the Congressional Prayer Caucus, Congressman Forbes and Congressman McIntyre, reintroduced legislation to recognize our nation’s religious history. [H.Res.253](#), America’s Spiritual Heritage Resolution, affirms the rich spiritual and diverse religious history of our nation’s founding and subsequent history, and designates the first week in May as America’s Spiritual Heritage Week.

**Congressional members working to decrease frivolous lawsuits challenging public expressions of religion.** Members of the Prayer Caucus are supporting [H.R.2023](#), introduced by Congressman Dan Burton, which would ensure that the legal system is not used to extort money from state and local governments through frivolous lawsuits against public expressions of religion. H.R. 2023 would not prevent parties from filing lawsuits alleging Establishment Clause violations, but it would require each side to pay its own attorneys’ fees. The bill would limit the remedies available to the suing party, so the only relief available would be that the state or local government would be required to stop its public expression of religion, if the court deems it unconstitutional. The result would be a decrease in frivolous lawsuits and the assurance that state and local governments are not intimidated into halting constitutional public expressions of religion.

**Supporting the addition of the D-day Prayer to the World War Two Memorial.** Members of the INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA | Post Office Box 915, Purcellville, VA 20134 | [GetAmericaPraying.com](#) Tel 800-USA-PRAY | email [IFA@IFApray.org](mailto:IFA@IFApray.org) | Find us on our [Facebook page!](#)

Prayer Caucus are supporting [H.R.2070](#), the World War II Memorial Prayer Act, introduced by Congressman Bill Johnson. H.R. 2070 directs the Secretary of the Interior to add President Franklin D. Roosevelt's D-Day Prayer to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. President Roosevelt delivered the prayer to the nation on June 6, 1944, the day that American troops stormed the beaches of Normandy, France.

**Recognize the significant impact of the Ten Commandments on America's development.** Members of the Prayer Caucus are supporting [H.Res.211](#), introduced by Congressman Louie Gohmert, which recognizes the significant contribution that the Ten Commandments have made in shaping America's principles, institutions, and national character. The bill supports designating the first weekend in May as "Ten Commandments Weekend."