

## TIA Hits the Road for Election-Year Activism

By **Anne Sclater**, Voter Education Associate  
 asclater@interfaithalliance.org

The Interfaith Alliance (TIA) headquarters may be based in Washington, but the organization's strength truly lies with our network of activists and members across the country. Bringing the *One Nation, Many Faiths. VOTE 2006* message directly to them was the goal of this fall's election-year "Road Show."

Staff members spent weeks on the road from August to October, visiting four great American cities with election-related programming. In each city, a panel of national and local religious and political experts gathered to lead a public discussion about the ways faith and belief have affected campaigning in 2006.

While most religious political activism concentrates on what houses of worship and religious leaders can *not* do, TIA prefers to highlight what types of involvement are



TIA president, Rev. Dr. Welton Gaddy, and staff traveled across the country this fall bringing the One Nation, Many Faiths. Vote 2006 program to religious leaders, TIA members and activists concerned about the impact of election-year politics on religion and houses of worship.

### Contents

From the President's Desk	2
Special Election-Year Alert	3
Interfaith Leader in Action: Imam Mahdi Bray	4
Policy Update: 1st Amendment	4
Help Us Put Your First Freedom First	5
Politics, Piety and Polling	6
Training Religious Liberty LEADders	7

allowed by IRS guidelines. The 2006 election-year program seeks to illustrate a healthy relationship between religion and government—one that preserves the independence of religious institutions and ensures that Americans' values are not replaced by a sectarian agenda. At the forums, TIA members and local activists are trained to initiate appropriate faith-based activism in their houses of worship around issues of concern to their community.

TIA also reminds Americans that their personal religious beliefs can and should

find public expression through thoughtful involvement in the electoral process. Election-year training includes everything from advice on running a voter registration drive to holding special roundtable discussions where clergy can share examples of special challenges they have faced in election years.

At each stop on the "Road Show," TIA assembled a distinguished panel of experts:

- In Portland, OR, TIA President Welton Gaddy moderated a panel that featured local activist

*Continued page 7*

# Help Keep Partisan Politics from Dividing America's Houses of Worship

Dear Friends of The Interfaith Alliance (TIA),

TIA has worked diligently for more than 12 years to bring the positive, healing power of religion to a volatile and polarized political battlefield. This election year, our nonpartisan voter education forums, *One Nation, Many Faiths. Vote 2006*, have brought together outstanding speakers and diverse communities in Nevada, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Oregon.

Particularly in election years, TIA monitors and exposes the political exploitation of religion and the sectarian manipulation of politics. Of course, many of the same dubious tactics resurface each year. But every campaign season we discover new "innovations" that the Religious Right, candidates and political parties employ to manipulate religion for political purposes.

As always, TIA calls on all politicians to refrain from using houses of worship as campaign venues. Our work is being highlighted on television and in newspapers across the country as we expose attempts to convert houses of worship into partisan political rally halls. We also took action by condemning political mailings that warned the Bible would be banned from America if the "wrong people" were elected.

For instance, in her current race for the U.S. Senate, Rep. Katherine Harris has often repeated distorted claims that the

constitutional separation of religion and government is a "lie" and that America was founded as a "Christian nation," despite all the documents and history to the contrary. In Kansas, Attorney General Phill

Kline, the state's chief law enforcement official, wrote a detailed, strategic campaign memo—intended to be private—outlining numerous ways to infiltrate houses of worship for fundraising and aiding his re-election campaign. In Tennessee's Senatorial race, Rep. Harold Ford, Jr., has televised an ad filmed inside a church to emphasize his religiosity and to challenge his opponent's moral values.

Apparently neither Ford nor Kline violated IRS guidelines, but in each case their actions risked seducing houses of worship into losing their tax-exempt status and splitting congregations over partisan politics.

To protect houses of worship nationwide, TIA responded with an open letter to the Republican and Democratic national committees, calling on them to stop the political abuse of religion. Neither party responded. However, TIA's letter has been featured in the news nationwide.

America's Constitution was brilliantly designed to guarantee democracy and freedom of belief by keeping religion and government distinct and separate. But it is up to us to preserve our freedoms from those who would compromise Americans' deepest values to further their political agenda.

You can read in this newsletter about our newest project, *First Freedom First*, we need you and all of our members to sign the petition. Please share it with your family, friends and colleagues. As always, thank you for your continued support of *One Nation, Many Faiths. Vote 2006* and of all of TIA's programs to protect religious liberty and the separation of religion and government.

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy  
President

P.S. Please use the enclosed envelope to support TIA's work to protect religious freedom. And don't forget to vote on Tuesday, November 7.



Ask  
*Shayla*

By **Shayla Woodson**, Member Services Associate  
[memberservices@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:memberservices@interfaithalliance.org)

*As the end of 2006 approaches, there are many ways you can donate to The Interfaith Alliance. For your convenience, below I've listed a few different options for our friends and members to support our work.*

- 1) **Monthly Giving** – The quickest and most efficient way to support TIA, you can join the Torchbearer monthly giving program by mail, by phone or online. Automated monthly donations are received via debit and credit cards or by check EFT. As an added bonus, Torchbearers don't receive regular solicitations once processed.
- 2) **In Memory/In Honor Donations** – To honor or memorialize a loved one or colleague, you may want to consider making a gift to TIA. Please include the contact information of the recipient and/or their family so we can acknowledge your gift. The amount stays confidential and you will receive a special acknowledgement for your records.
- 3) **Planned Giving** – TIA recently launched an Estate Planning Education series. If you want to receive more information or are interested in joining the Walter Cronkite Legacy Society, please contact Julius Weiss via email at [plannedgiving@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:plannedgiving@interfaithalliance.org) or call (800) 510-0969.
- 4) **Special Gifts** – You attended an Election-Year event and want to contribute? The LEADD camp's success motivated you to donate? Your designated support for specific programs is always welcome. Note: These donations cannot be applied as membership renewals. Many are, however, tax deductible through The Interfaith Alliance *Foundation*.

# Special Election-Year Alert: TIA Helps Religious Leaders Stay Prophetic During Turbulent Political Times

By **Kim Baldwin**, Director of Public Policy and Voter Education  
[kbaldwin@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:kbaldwin@interfaithalliance.org)

As you know, Election Day 2006 is fast approaching. With recent news of IRS investigations into the affairs of houses of worship, politicians filming campaign ads in churches and candidates ordering staff to get as much face time and support from as many congregations as possible, phones at The Interfaith Alliance (TIA) have been ringing off the hook. Members, activists and

## Religious Leader Roundtables

TIA has conducted multiple roundtable discussions with religious leaders around the country to discuss the unique challenges they face in an election-year and to educate them about ways to appropriately engage in nonpartisan political activity with their congregations. Most religious leaders we met are concerned that their houses of worship will be influenced by outside persuasion to function as partisan rally halls.



religious leaders all over the country are concerned about the implications these incidents have on the sanctity of religion and the autonomy of religious leaders. Rest assured, TIA is not sitting on the sidelines. In the months leading up to November 7, our *One Nation, Many Faiths. VOTE 2006* program has been leading the way by providing legal and ethical guidance to candidates, clergy and voters.

Many have already been contacted by campaigns asking to visit the church or speak from the pulpit. As TIA looks ahead to the 2008 elections, we will use this feedback to inform future resources and programs for clergy and candidates.

## TIA Teams Up with IRS

In early October, TIA and the IRS held a phone seminar for religious leaders across the country. The call specifically focused on the

dos and don'ts for 501(c)3 organizations in an election year. The representative from the IRS enumerated many activities that houses of worship can participate in an election year, such as engaging in nonpartisan voter registration, encouraging congregants to vote, supporting and opposing ballot initiatives and hosting candidate debates. Actions prohibited by IRS guidelines include explicitly or implicitly endorsing a candidate from the pulpit, donating congregational funds to a campaign or political party, ordering congregants to vote for a particular candidate and displaying partisan political signage on church property. To listen to the call, read the IRS Fact Sheet or order TIA's election-year guide for Houses of Worship, log on to [www.interfaithalliance.org/elections](http://www.interfaithalliance.org/elections).

## Political Parties Urged to Respect Religion, Houses of Worship

The recent rush of candidates and political parties—and their often aggressive tactics—to reach out to people of faith is seducing religious organizations and leaders of faith traditions into dangerous legal territory. When candidates and their supporters use religious rhetoric to advance partisan interests, or when they imply that their candidacy or policies have divine endorsement, Americans and our houses of worship become susceptible to deep divisions.

As such, TIA has issued an open letter to the chairs of the National Republican and Democratic Parties urging—for the sake of religion—that they carefully consider and advise their colleagues to refrain from speaking from the pulpit, bema or lectern; using sanctuaries or houses of worship as backdrops for campaign ads; collecting congregational membership directories for fundraising and organizing; and asking a house of worship to distribute partisan voter guides or other material that opposes or supports a candidate for office. 

## TIA Board Member Imam Mahdi Bray Seeks Justice Through Faith

By **William Blake**, Media Relations Associate  
[wblake@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:wblake@interfaithalliance.org)

Washington D.C. is a city known for energetic political activists. And then there is Imam Mahdi Bray. Listening to Imam Bray speak is the verbal equivalent of a shot of adrenaline—and he has a lot to say.

A longtime civil rights activist, Bray is currently Executive Director of the Muslim American Society's Freedom Foundation and President of the Coordinating Council of Muslim

Organizations. He began his activism in the 1960s while working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. In fact, Bray became a Muslim at a young age because



of the “egalitarian principles of Islam and most of all, the focus on social justice.”

Growing up in the segregated South, Bray's house was firebombed by members of the Ku Klux Klan because of his family's efforts to register black voters for the NAACP.

“People told me I could only drink from the water fountains marked colored,” said Bray. “Well, I drank out of both fountains, and the water still tasted the same.”

Imam Bray directs several community outreach and civic empowerment programs. Noting that “all politics is local,” Bray's efforts are focused at the grassroots level, such as getting more American Muslims active in

parent-teacher associations and neighborhood watch programs.

Recently, Imam Bray helped launch the Voting Is Power (VIP) campaign, which aims to help thousands of Muslims register to vote.

One part of this program is to place ATM-style kiosks in major mosques that would automate the voter registration process. “Oftentimes, Muslim immigrants are more concerned about the situation back in their native countries,” he said. “We cannot allow our community to ignore the situation here in America.”

Imam Bray not only educates Muslims on issues like civil rights and religious liberties, but he also focuses on a broader agenda of economic justice, health care and education. Bray cites a chapter in the Qur'an called the Al-Ma'un that calls on Muslims to “do neighborly deeds” for the most vulnerable members of society.

Imam Bray became active with The Interfaith Alliance because working across religious lines “is a bridge so critical to the understanding people. We all need to come together a little and work together a lot,” he said.

Learn more about Imam Mahdi Bray at [www.interfaithalliance.org/board](http://www.interfaithalliance.org/board). 

### POLICY UPDATE

## Working With You to Ensure the 1st Amendment Doesn't Play Second Fiddle to Partisan Politics

By **Preetmohan Singh**, Deputy Director of Public Policy  
[psingh@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:psingh@interfaithalliance.org)

By the time members of Congress left for home to campaign at the end of September, they heard an unmistakable message from thousands of TIA members like you: **Don't weaken our First Amendment with election-year antics.** With Election Day near, our work is far from over and we still need your help to ensure that these bills never become law.

Before adjourning, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the cleverly-titled “Public Expression of Religion Act” (PERA, H.R. 2679). PERA would eliminate damages and awards of attorneys' fees in cases where

the First Amendment's Establishment Clause—which bans the government from promoting religion—was violated. It passed by a vote of 244–173.

Truly creating a double-standard, the proposed legislation would not impact any causes brought under the Free Exercise Clause. These provisions are a boon to radical religious right organizations, which often file lawsuits under the Free Exercise Clause. Conversely, the bill would disproportionately affect religious minorities who often file lawsuits on Establishment grounds at their own expense.

PERA may resurface in the Senate during the “lame duck” Congressional session at the

end of this year, so please watch your email inboxes for TIA's Religious Liberty Action Alerts for updates on this legislation. (Sign up at [www.interfaithalliance.org](http://www.interfaithalliance.org).)

Another possible threat to religious liberty during the “lame duck session” is the Senate's potential adoption of language to allow military chaplains to recite sectarian prayers. Already passed by the House, H.R. 5122 Section 590 (titled *Military Chaplains*), would give chaplains the “prerogative to pray according to the dictates of the chaplain's own conscience...” While the language seems reasonable, it has the effect of disrespecting the diversity of religious beliefs in our military.

*Continued page 5*

# Help Us Put Your First Freedom First

By **Eric Shutt**, Project Manager  
[eshutt@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:eshutt@interfaithalliance.org)

As you know, the Constitution guarantees you the right to make decisions about how you live your life. With regard to religion, the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights strictly forbids the government from establishing an official religion or from interfering in your free exercise of faith. But right now, politicians trying to impose their religious views into law and public policy are gravely endangering your freedom of—and from—religion.

In response, The Interfaith Alliance Foundation (TIAF) is proud to announce a new program, First Freedom First, a partnership project with Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU).

First Freedom First is the largest public awareness and education effort of its kind, connecting the dots between religious liberty—our first freedom—and social and public policy issues. With the goal of collecting hundreds of thousands of signatures, TIAF and AU will present the petitions to leaders of major political parties, urging a renewed commitment to religious liberty and separation of church and state in their party platforms. While absolutely avoiding the endorsement of any candidates or party, First Freedom First wants these issues to become a significant part of the public debate during the 2008 election cycle.



Safeguarding separation  
of church and state,  
protecting religious liberty

First Freedom First focuses on eight issue areas where religious liberty and politics often collide: **Academic Integrity, Respect for All Families, Sound Science, End of Life Care, Reproductive Health, Worship...or Not, NO Religious Discrimination and Democracy NOT Theocracy.**

We need your participation in First Freedom First! The easiest—and most important—way you can help is by signing the First Freedom First petition at [www.FirstFreedomFirst.org](http://www.FirstFreedomFirst.org).

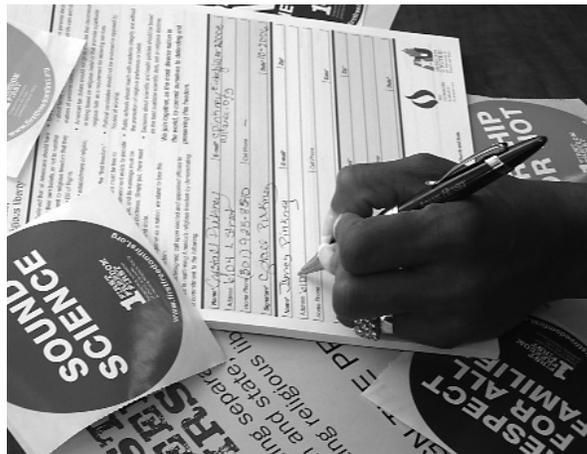
After you (and your friends) sign, please take a look at the other opportunities for

getting involved that pique your interest—from holding First Freedom First house parties to entering our home video contest about protecting your First Amendment rights.

## Freedom Forums

In cities and towns across America, TIAF assembled expert panelists to address current issues related to our first freedom. From Portland to Birmingham, Columbus to Phoenix, and Pittsburgh to Las Vegas, our First Freedom Forums sparked dialogue about religious liberty and its impact on Americans' daily lives. Participants lined up to sign the petition and took copies to share with their friends and neighbors, helping to spread the word about the First Freedom First project.

You can be a part of **First Freedom First**, too. Please sign the petition online, and get involved through email alerts or with one of our 75 local activist groups. If you are not online, contact TIAF at (800) 510-0969 and we'll send you a copy by mail. 



## 1st Amendment

from page 4

Military chaplains are already permitted to pray in a manner fitting their individual religious tradition in worship services in voluntary settings. In non-voluntary settings, TIA supports chaplains who currently pray in a manner respectful of diverse beliefs when a

gathering is a "command ceremony" or another required activity.

It is important to note that TIA joins the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, which represents the vast majority of military chaplains, in opposing this Section 590 language because it is bad for religion and democracy in our multi-faith nation.

**GET INVOLVED WITH FIRST FREEDOM FIRST!**

- **SIGN** the Petition.
- **HOST** a House Party.
- **ENTER** a Contest.
- **TELL** your Friends.

For details on how you can help make First Freedom First a success, please contact [eshutt@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:eshutt@interfaithalliance.org) today.

Again, many thanks for making your voice heard by contacting your representatives on these bills. Please continue watching your inboxes for Religious Liberty Action Alerts when there is movement on these issues in Congress. We must work in tandem through the end of this Congress to ensure religious liberty does not play second fiddle to partisan politics. 

# Politics, Piety and Polling

## Pew and Baylor Studies Divulge Americans' Views on God and Politics

By **William Blake**, Media Relations Associate  
[wblake@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:wblake@interfaithalliance.org)

George Gallup once said, "I could prove God statistically." While his statement is farfetched, two recent academic studies of religion and politics reveal several interesting conclusions about the American people, our political parties and our houses of worship.

The latest national survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life finds that most Americans continue to say that religion's influence on the country is declining. However, most who express this view believe that such decreased influence is less than positive. Americans also overwhelmingly consider the U.S. a Christian nation: 67% characterize the country this way, which is up from 60% a decade ago.

As you can see in the figure to the right, the Democratic Party continues to face a serious "God problem," with just 26% saying the party is friendly to religion. However, the proportion of Americans who say the Republican Party is friendly to religion, while much larger, has fallen in the past year, with a particularly sharp decline coming among white evangelical Protestants (14%).

Americans remain conflicted about what the appropriate relationship should be between religion and government. When asked whether liberals have gone too far in trying to keep religion out of schools and government, 69% said yes. Conversely, when asked if conservatives have gone too far in imposing their religious values on the country, 49% answered yes, which is up five points from last year.

There is also a lack of consensus on whether houses of worship should express their views on pressing social and political questions. Roughly half (51%) of Americans surveyed say houses of worship should express their views on such issues, while 46% believe they should keep out of such matters.

Baylor University recently released one of the most comprehensive studies of religion

ever conducted. The study found that most non-atheist Americans conceive of God through one of four methodologies, which you can see in the figure below.

Believers in an **Authoritarian God** tend view God as angry and capable of meting out punishment to those who are unfaithful or ungodly. Individuals who subscribe to a **Benevolent God** believe God is mainly a force of positive influence in the world and is less willing to condemn or punish individuals. Believers in a **Critical God** feel that God really does not interact with the world. However, God still observes the world and views the current state of the world unfavorably. Individuals who believe in a **Distant God** think of God as a cosmic force which set the laws of nature in motion. Thus, God does not interact with the world and does not hold clear opinions about world events.

These different ways of viewing religion have a profound impact on how individuals view political and moral issues. Believers in a Critical God are the most likely to favor the equal distribution of wealth, the closer regulation of businesses and protection of the environment. Adherents to a Benevolent God are the

least likely to support affirmative action. Believers in a Distant God are more than twice as likely as people who believe in an Authoritarian God to want the government to abolish the death penalty. Believers in an Authoritarian God are more than three times as likely to desire government funding for faith-based organizations than are believers in a Distant God. 

*The Pew Survey, conducted in July 2006 among 2,003 adults, has a margin of error of 2.5 percentage points. The Baylor Religion Survey is a nationally representative survey of 1,721 respondents conducted from October–December, 2005. The margin of error is plus or minus four percent.*

Parties Attitudes Toward Religion		
The Republican Party is...	2005	2006
Friendly	55%	47%
Neutral	23%	28%
Unfriendly	9%	13%
The Democratic Party is...	2005	2006
Friendly	29%	26%
Neutral	38%	42%
Unfriendly	20%	20%

America's Four Conceptions of God					
	Authoritarian God	Benevolent God	Critical God	Distant God	Atheist
Overall	31%	23%	16%	24%	2%
Church Attendance					
Attends weekly	31%	32%	10%	24%	5%
Never attends	14%	8%	17%	42%	20%
Gender					
Male	29%	15%	20%	28%	8%
Female	34%	30%	12%	21%	2%

# Training the Next Generation of Religious Liberty LEADDers

By **Preetmohan Singh**, Deputy Director of Public Policy  
[psingh@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:psingh@interfaithalliance.org)

In August, students from across the country were transformed into LEADDers.

LEADD, a new week-long summer camp developed by The Interfaith Alliance, set out to empower high school students to become informed and engaged participants in our religiously diverse democracy. Our inaugural camp brought together 30 high school students—Roman Catholics, Jains, Baptists, Unitarians, Methodists, Muslims, Baptists, Jews, Sikhs, and atheists—from across the country.

The participant “LEADDers” learned about religious liberty and pluralism from



educators and public policy experts. During the camp, attendees focused on viable action plans to strengthen democracy and diversity within their local communities. The faculty and staff could not have been more impressed with the ambition and creativity of the group. And during the 2006–07 academic year, LEADD alumni will be implementing their action plans to address issues important in their communities.

The intensive curriculum encouraged students to explore the following issues in depth:

- The First Amendment: The Free Exercise and Disestablishment of Religion
- America’s Diverse Religious Traditions
- Appropriate Role of Religion in the Public Square
- How to Promote “Active Pluralism” in your Communities

The educational experience was complemented by the beautiful North



Carolina mountain setting. There were also plenty of opportunities for LEADDers to have fun—hiking, team building, swimming and creating lifelong friendships.

*The Light* will feature commentary by and about LEADDers in future issues. You can learn more about the LEADD program by logging on at [www.weLEADD.org](http://www.weLEADD.org). To apply for the Summer 2007 session please contact Shantá Gray at (800) 510-0969 or by email at [sgray@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:sgray@interfaithalliance.org). 

## Cover Story

from page 1

Phillip Wong, former Oregon legislator Donna Zajonc, *State of Belief* producer Brendan McDonald and prominent religion/politics blogger Chuck Currie.

- TIA Vice President Suzie Armstrong moderated the panel in Pittsburgh, PA, which included TIA Board member Rabbi Jack Moline of Agudas Achim Congregation; Clemson University political scientist Laura Olson; the Rev. Dr. George Regas, retired rector of All Saints Church in Pasadena, California; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette religion reporter Ann Rodgers; and Harvard scholar Hussein Rashid, whose blog, “Islamicate,” offers a unique view on Islam in America.
- In Las Vegas, NV, the Rev. Romal Tune, a Baptist minister and longtime friend of TIA, moderated the session. Panelists included

UNLV political scientist Ted Jelen; author and commentator Amy Sullivan; Amy Kay of the Justice at Stake Campaign; from the Atlanta African American Ministers Leadership Council the Rev. Timothy McDonald; and Republican political strategist Bill Smith of Bill Smith and Associates.

- Detroit, MI, the final stop for the 2006 TIA “Road Show,” offered a warm welcome to TIA president and moderator Welton Gaddy as well as panelists Greg Epstein, the Humanist chaplain at Harvard University; the Rev. Bob Edgar, president of the National Council of Churches and a former member of Congress; Catholics for a Free Choice president Frances Kissling; and Dr. Tarunjit Singh Butalia, Chair of Interfaith Committee, World Sikh Council (America Region).

November 7 might mark the end of the election season for another two years, but it won’t be the end of the TIA election-year

program. We’ll wrap up the 2006 season and immediately look ahead to 2008 at the final election-year event in Cleveland, OH.

TIA chose Cleveland for the final event because of the pivotal role that Ohio has played in recent elections. In a place where campaign advertising is inescapable and allegations of voting irregularities are almost unavoidable, we find a willing audience for our message of informed civic participation. Please join us on December 12 in Cleveland as we reflect on the 2006 elections and look ahead to 2008.

The Cleveland event will be held at 7pm on Tuesday, December 12, at the Hyatt Regency Cleveland (420 Superior Avenue). The meeting and the reception that will precede it are free and open to the public. Please join us. For more information, visit [www.interfaithalliance.org/elections](http://www.interfaithalliance.org/elections). 

The Interfaith Alliance and The Interfaith Alliance *Foundation*  
1331 H Street, NW, 11th Floor  
Washington, DC 20005  
Tel: (800) 510-0969 or (202) 639-6370  
Fax: (202) 639-6375  
www.interfaithalliance.org



THE  
INTERFAITH  
ALLIANCE  
*Foundation*

*The Light* is a quarterly newsletter published by The Interfaith Alliance. Contributions to The Interfaith Alliance are **not** tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. The Interfaith Alliance is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization.

Please e-mail suggestions or questions concerning *The Light* to [newsletter@interfaithalliance.org](mailto:newsletter@interfaithalliance.org).

Editor/Production Manager: Julianne Simitz  
Designed by Paras Productions, Inc.

TIA6NL

**One Nation, Many Faiths ★ [www.interfaithalliance.org](http://www.interfaithalliance.org) ★ VOTE 2006**



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE U.S. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

**ON NOVEMBER 7, 2006**

**...until you know where your candidates stand on religious liberty and  
the separation of religion & government**

