



Current Issues Monitoring Report For the week ending July 4, 2008

Faith-based Initiative

Senator Barack Obama announced yesterday that if elected he plans to expand the program which steers federal social services funding to religious groups. He also says he believes that religious organizations should have the ability to hire and fire employees based on their faith for the non-taxpayer funded portions of their ministries.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080701/ap_on_el_pr/obama_faith

Gay Marriage

Civil rights groups in **California** filed a lawsuit with the state Supreme Court to block the ballot measure that seeks to ban gay marriage in the state constitution. They argue that the petition was circulated before the court found the state's previous law forbidding gay marriage unconstitutional and is misleading and improper. Supporters of the amendment filed a 46-page petition this week saying that the legal challenge is a "desperate" attempt to "evade the democratic process."

http://www.insidebayarea.com/argus/ci_9754992

Homelessness

The state of the economy and the foreclosure crisis is causing more people to live out of their cars or RVs, according to an activist for the homeless. **California** coastal cities like Venice Beach have seen a big increase in the number of RVs and campers on the streets as well as an increase in the number of complaints from local residents. Like other cities, it's illegal to live in your vehicle in **Los Angeles**, but enforcing the law is difficult. So, the Los Angeles City Council enacted a new law this year that keeps people from parking overnight in some residential neighborhoods. A first offense carries a \$50 fine and subsequent violations can cost as much as \$100.

http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,370426,00.html

In Other News...

Last week a Pew survey found that 92% of Americans believe in God or a "universal spirit" and 58% say they pray privately every day. **Californians** were less likely than other Americans to say that they think religion is "very important" to them or say they believe in God with "absolute certainty." A spokesperson for the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life said that the West Coast is generally less religiously observant. Also, the study found that people are switching religious affiliations or cutting ties altogether in increasing numbers. Protestants, who hold a majority status in the US, are close to becoming a minority.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-me-faith24-2008jun24.0,1595990.story>