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## Florida Elections and the Rule of Law

As I write, the outcome of the presidential election is still uncertain. All eyes are on the controversy in Florida surrounding the mechanized tabulation of voter ballots. Vice President Al Gore claims that voting machines have unfairly rejected thousands of defective ballots that if counted, would move him ahead of Gov. George W. Bush in the Florida contest.

Attorneys for the Gore campaign have taken their arguments to court as the Vice President continues to call for the Rule of Law to determine the outcome of the presidential race in Florida. But according to Economics Professor Friedrich A. Hayek, a 1974 Nobel Prize winner, the actions of Mr. Gore are undermining the Rule of Law.

In his book, The Road to Serfdom, Hayek argues that the Rule of Law is not about what the legislatures or courts say - it is about the predictability and uniformity of application of rules. He writes:

“Stripped of all technicalities, this means that government in all its actions is bound by rules fixed and announced beforehand—rules which make it possible to foresee with fair certainty how the authority will use its coercive powers in given circumstances and to plan one’s individual affairs on the basis of this knowledge.”

“It may even be said that for the Rule of Law to be effective it is more important that there should be a rule applied always without exceptions than what this rule is. Often the content of the rule is indeed of minor importance, provided the same rule is universally enforced. To revert to a former example: it does not matter whether we all drive on the left or on the right-hand side of the road so long as we all do the same. The important thing is that the rule enables us to predict other people’s behavior correctly, and this requires that it should apply to all cases—even if in a particular instance we feel it to be unjust.”<sup>1</sup>

The demand for reconsideration of invalid or (damaged ballots) in three south Florida counties which traditionally favor Democratic candidates is a departure from long-standing election laws (rules) agreed to in the past by both major parties, both houses of the Florida legislature, and the Governor. A ruling by the Florida Supreme Court to change the election rules after-the-fact, may well be a victory for Vice President Al Gore, but certainly not for the Rule of Law.

That said, I want to speak to our many supporters who have expressed frustration with the election process and wonder where God is in all of this. Certainly, we are all concerned with stories of voter fraud and the possibility that the man who will assume office on January 20<sup>th</sup> will be unfit or undeserving to be President.

However, if our hope for *America* rests in the next President, our hope is misplaced.

During quiet times of prayer, I been reassured that God's plans have not been frustrated. HIS plans are established and we have much to be thankful for.

I am thankful for your tremendous support during this past election season. With your help, we distributed hundreds of thousands of voter guides to many churches statewide. I believe our guides made the difference in a number of close races.

Special thanks are also in order to the many businesses such as Christian Supply Book Stores who made our guides available to their customers. When you visit one of their stores in Kent, Burien, Covington, Bellevue, Lynnwood, and Spokane - let them know how much they are appreciated.

And, finally, let me tell you what an incredible job our volunteers did in getting the guides in the hands of voters. Many churches agreed to take our voter guides for the first time because of the friendly persuasion of our volunteers. But our hard workers wanted you to know that they still encountered indifference and even resistance from some churches.

One pastor refused the voter guides because his church is a "seeker-friendly church." Another said his church is half liberal and half conservative and he did not want to offend his members. A priest turned a volunteer away saying "our people are already informed." Other churches were misinformed, believing that it is illegal for them to distribute the guides.

Why mention these few negative reports when the overall response was so positive? Because the results of this election have made the truth crystal clear: every vote counts.

A pro-life incumbent in the "seeker-friendly" district is 129 votes short of re-election with only three more hours of official counting left. His re-election would have broken the 49-49 tie in our state house. Our state senate would be returned to the pro-life party today at 5 PM for only 456 more votes in the district whose "people are already informed." The district of the church with the half and half congregation, returned to office, the legislature's only openly gay representative--without opposition.

It is clear we must double our efforts to contact biblically-based but misinformed or timid churches and help them to become both a lighthouse and the moral conscience of their communities.

As we build relationships with pastors and educate them about their rights and their responsibilities .....we will see more Christians who understand the times, understand the issues, and (drum roll....) VOTE!

*Rick Forcier*

Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> The Road to Serfdom, Friedrich A. Hayek, The University of Chicago Press, 1944, 1972, pg. 72, 80.