

2431 as reported by the Committee on International Relations, the Committee on the Judiciary, and the Committee on Ways and Means, a copy of which is now available for review at the Committee on International relations.

Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to ensure that their amendments are properly drafted and should check with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain their amendments comply with the Rules of the House.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FILING DEADLINE FOR H.R. 3616, FISCAL YEAR 1999 DOD AUTHORIZATION BILL

(Mr. GOSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Florida is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I take this time for the purpose of making an additional announcement.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee on Rules is planning to meet early in the week of May 18 to grant a rule which may restrict amendments for consideration of H.R. 3616, the Defense Authorization Bill for Fiscal Year 1999.

Any Member contemplating an amendment should submit 55 copies of the amendment and a brief explanation to the Committee on Rules in H-312 of the Capitol no later than 2 p.m. on Thursday, May 14.

Amendments should be drafted to the text of the reported version of the bill, a copy of which will become available during the day tomorrow at the Committee on National Security. The report will be filed early next week.

Members should use the Office of Legislative Counsel to ensure that the amendments are properly drafted and should check with the Office of the Parliamentarian to be certain that amendments comply with the Rules of the House.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, MAY 11, 1998

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 2 p.m. on Monday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

HOURLY MEETING ON TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1998

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns on Monday, May 11, 1998, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12, 1998 for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

HOURLY MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 1998

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns on Tuesday, May 12, 1998, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, May 13, 1998 for the purpose of receiving in this Chamber former Members of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

AUTHORIZING THE SPEAKER TO DECLARE A RECESS ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 1998, FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that it may be in order on Wednesday, May 13, 1998 for the Speaker to declare a recess, subject to the call of the Chair, for the purpose of receiving in this Chamber former members of this Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BONIOR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I take this time for the purpose of inquiring about the schedule for the rest of the week and the schedule for the following week.

Let me just pose the question, are we waiting for one of the leaders to come out to the floor?

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, will the minority whip yield for a question?

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to my friend from Texas.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I have been here for the purposes of hoping to hear in the schedule for next week that we were going to have campaign finance reform up, since that was sort of agreed to here when we had a discharge petition that was pulled down, and we had the indication that we were going to have this bill up. I had hoped to be over here to hear that colloquy be-

tween you and the majority. I guess they are not here.

Mr. BONIOR. I am still hoping that they will come. That was one of my main concerns on the schedule for next week.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I have just been informed, obviously we did not have a rollcall, and the leaders have been off campus, and we will be publishing next week's schedule in the RECORD.

Mr. BONIOR. Does the gentleman from Florida know if campaign finance will be brought up next week?

Mr. FOLEY. That is all I know. That is all the information I have at this time.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I really have tried to be very reasonable about these discussions this year. I am a little concerned here. Forgive me for getting into this issue, but we have had so many miscommunications, delays, and, if you will pardon me, broken promises on this that I am disturbed by this.

There was a handshake by the President and the Speaker that we would have campaign finance reform. Nothing happened for a long period of time. Then, in March, we had this procedure that really locked out a lot of the issues that people wanted to talk about on this floor, especially the Meehan-Shays proposal and other very good proposals.

Then we had a discharge petition, and it looked like it was going to get discharged. There were some comments made that we are going to have a vote on this in May, and now we hear reports that we are not going to vote in May. We are going to vote after May when we come back from the May recess.

It is very, very disturbing, and I would like some answers. I would like to hear from the Republican leadership what is going on and why these broken promises continue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BAESLER) and my other friend from Texas on this issue because it is something we need an answer on.

Mr. BAESLER. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the leadership, the Speaker, made a commitment that we are going to vote on this issue in May. We are hearing rumors now that we are not going to vote in May and maybe vote after Memorial Day.

We also are hearing rumors that maybe Shays-Meehan may not be proper. That was also a commitment made by the Speaker and the leadership to encourage those Republicans and others to withdraw the names from the discharge petition.

It is our position, those of us who originated the petition, those of us who signed, if we do not have an answer on this within the next day or two, we are

going to try and reinstate the petition because we feel like we are getting the runaround.

Somebody said a while ago in this chamber we are going to trust to verify. That is what we said. So far, we have trusted, but it had not been verified by the leadership.

Now to avoid the discussion today, I think this is the height of arrogance. That is what got us here in the first place is arrogance.

We would like to know what is going to be debated. We don't have but 2 or 3 more weeks in May. I think we all, not only the membership, but the public as a whole are entitled to know whether or not the commitment is going to be maintained by the Speaker or whether, once again, they are going to run from this issue which obviously they are afraid of.

□ 1530

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DOGGETT. The gentleman may be aware that the Speaker has answered this question.

Back on April 22, Congress Daily reported that Speaker GINGRICH himself told Congress Daily that we would have a fair and open debate on campaign finance not just during May, not just before the Memorial Day recess, but by May 15. By my calendar, that is next Friday.

We have the tentative schedule that the Republican leadership has put out for next week and there is not any reference to campaign finance reform on it and, apparently, they are afraid to come out here and tell the American people that.

I wonder if the gentleman has been advised anything to the contrary? I thought they had broken all the promises there were to break on campaign finance reform, but they have found yet another promise to break with the Speaker having promised and said in print that it will be done by May 15, next Friday. They have misrepresented to the American people. They do not have any intention to do it and do not have the courage to come out here and tell the American people that.

Mr. BONIOR. I am hopeful we can get an answer from the Speaker, from the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) or the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) or someone on the other side of the aisle as to what the disposition will be on this important issue. I am waiting, and when they come I will be delighted to hear their answers.

But the gentleman is absolutely right; this was the promise made, and we will wait to see if it is going to be broken or not. I am still hopeful that they will bring it up before we leave.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. STENHOLM. I thank the gentleman for yielding to me. My col-

league from Texas adequately pointed out that the tentative schedule for next week does not include the mention of campaign finance reform, and that is what brought me to the floor of the House to inquire.

Timing could not possibly be a problem, because here it is 3:30 on Thursday afternoon. We have adjourned for the week. There will be no votes tomorrow, on Friday, no votes on Monday, and no votes on the next Friday. There was a promise made. And back where I come from, your word is your bond and a handshake is as good as a contract.

This is very disturbing, particularly since we were at the verge of having a discharge petition that would have discharged a very fair rule; that would have allowed all ideas. And I think it is incredibly important that when we do eventually get to campaign finance reform, and hopefully next week, that we will allow a clean up-and-down vote on the freshman bill and a clean up-and-down-vote on the Shays-Meehan bill, and then allow any Members of this body that have any constructive ideas of what should be included in campaign finance reform to be included.

That is what we worked awfully hard to do, and there was bipartisan support for that. There were promises made if they would just remove their names from the discharge petition, that we would get just exactly what we were asking for. And now these rumors that are circulating are very, very disturbing to many of us who, again, believe that our word is our bond.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the minority whip for yielding to me. I, too, have a question with regard to the schedule as relates to campaign finance reform. I am one of the freshman Members that participated in the bipartisan task force for the better part of a year and a half now, and it is going to be our base bill that is brought up eventually. But we are hearing these rumors as well that the guarantee, the promise that was made just a couple of short weeks ago, may be backed off from recently.

We have the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), who is one of the co-chairs of the bipartisan task force in attendance as well, and we were just wondering, because promises have been made in the past, agreements have been reached in regards to having a fair, open, and honest debate on campaign finance reform on this floor, handshakes have been given, and we are wondering whether or not this agreement that was reached just a couple of weeks ago is just another empty handshake in regards to one of the more important issues that we should be dealing with and debating honestly and fairly on the floor of the House of Representatives.

I am wondering if my friend from across the aisle has some information

that can clarify some of the concerns that we have right now based on the rumors that we are hearing that this finance reform bill may not come up this month and might possibly come up during the month of June.

We would like to have some information so that we have a way of preparing for this very important debate, a debate that I think that the people across this country desperately want this institution to have.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the gentleman there will be a fair and open debate on the question. There are negotiations ongoing. I think if the gentleman will give us some time, we will release the details of the scheduling for that particular matter.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, may I ask of my friend who the negotiations are with?

Mr. FOLEY. If the gentleman will continue to yield, the Members that have the amendments to, apparently, the reference of the freshman bill.

Mr. BONIOR. I am not familiar that our colleagues have been involved in these negotiations, nor am I familiar that the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN) has been involved in these negotiations, nor am I familiar with the fact that the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), or others who have legitimate concerns on this bill, have been involved. We are not involved in this. That is my problem.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. KIND. Speaking again as a member of the freshman task force that has been working on this issue, I can certainly state for the record that we have not been party to any negotiations as far as a schedule, as far as the form in which the legislation will be brought up.

It is my understanding that the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), who is one of the co-chairs of our task force, has not been privy to any discussions with the majority leadership on this important issue as well. So if negotiations are ongoing, we would certainly request to be included, since it is our bill that will be the base bill when this eventually does get taken up.

Mr. BONIOR. We understand that we are in the minority and that the other side will make the call on this. They have the votes to do it. But I think just common courtesy dictates that those who have been deeply involved in this issue for a number of years, and who care very deeply about this, be a part of how we are going to manage this very complex difficult and very long debate, I hope, on this issue.

We are just kind of left in the dark. We do not know what is happening. And I hope the other side can understand our concern, because we have had

promises broken on this, we believe promises broken on three separate occasions. And now, as the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) pointed out, May 15 was going to be the date. We get a tentative schedule; nothing on here reflecting a decision to go forward and discuss this bill next week.

And then, of course, rumors are floating around the Capitol this will not be voted on until June. First June, then July, and pretty soon we are into an election season and the American people do not have a visual or a record of how this Congress feels about changing a system that I think everybody on both sides of the aisle will agree is a system that is not good, it is not healthy for the country, it is a system that demeans our process, uses much of our time, and really takes cynicism to a low level in our country in terms of people's participation.

So all we want is to be part of the discussion. And that is why I am concerned and disturbed this afternoon, at a reasonable hour, 3:30, that we cannot get a member of the leadership of the other side to come out and give us an answer as to where we are with this, when we will have a decision, when we will do it, and under what form we will do it.

Under what form is very critical in terms of giving people the chance to express themselves. As the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) pointed out, I think accurately and fairly, what he and the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BAESLER) and others did with the discharge petition was to lay out a very open and fair rule in which everyone had a chance to put his or her amendments forward and to have a full debate on this issue.

But now we are hearing, well, we are not going to have that chance; that it is going to be narrowed and the Committee on Rules will craft it in such a way that we may not even get a clean shot on the Meehan-Shays bill; or that the freshman bill may not actually have a chance to play itself out; or the ideas of the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR) or fellow individuals on the other side who have ideas will not be able to express their views; or there may be a poison pill with respect to labor and gag rule issues, that we have dispensed with, by the way, on another occasion here, injected into this debate, which will screw up the works and we will not be able to move forward on this important issue.

Those are our concerns. I think they are legitimate. I do not think we are being petty or unfair in raising them this afternoon, and we would hope that we could get them addressed before the weekend.

Mr. KIND. If the gentleman will continue to yield, I think the form and the timing of this important piece of legislation is very important.

The feedback I am getting back home in western Wisconsin, in my district, are the people are engaged in this issue. They want us to take action on

it. I think the indication of that occurred during the Easter recess, when all the Members went back to their home districts and got feedback from their constituents. And that is why there was a rush to sign the discharge petition in order to get a fair and honest debate on bipartisan campaign finance reform to the House floor.

It is very evident that the American people want us to take action on it. They want to be engaged in this, and I think they deserve some answers as far as the timing and the form of this legislation as well. So if they want to weigh in on the issue, if they want to personally contact their representatives and let them know how they feel on the issue of getting the big money and the influence of money out of our political system, they will have that opportunity.

Thus far, we are hearing nothing from the majority leadership who is in control of the schedule here. They are not communicating with the freshman group that has worked long and hard on this important piece of legislation. And I just hope that we will get included in this as soon as possible so that we have some clarification on where we are going with this legislation.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. DOGGETT. I would express the same concern as our colleague from Wisconsin. First, that the American people have a legitimate concern about the need to reform our whole tax collection system. I have been hearing a lot about that. But in order for that to be a fair process, we have to take the money out of the system that is corrupting the system that really stands in the way of our getting real legitimate tax reform.

I want to bring to the gentleman's attention the fact that another member of the Republican leadership who was not willing to come out this afternoon has also spoken on this issue. "House majority leader ARMEY indicated Tuesday that campaign finance reform legislation could be on the House floor before the end of this session." This is a Congress Daily article dated September 17, 1997.

The credibility of the suggestion that there are private negotiations or that this is about to come up is tested by the fact that we have had these promises now ever since, I guess, the first day of the Republican revolution on January of 1995, that this issue would come up. And each of these promises each time either gets broken or changed.

Is the whip advised as to whether, in anticipation, this last promise of action by May 15 was relied upon by public interest groups not affiliated with either the Democratic or the Republican Party, and whether or not Common Cause and literally dozens of religious and public interest groups came

together in anticipation of our voting next week, by May 15, to present some type of bipartisan proposal for us to consider that would not advantage either party but might advantage the American people?

Mr. BONIOR. Well, that was our hope, that we would be able to move in that direction, and I think that was the hope of those organizations.

I think if anything is clear in this debate with respect to where those organizations are coming from, so to speak, it is that they are coming from a very nonpartisan approach to this. And they deserve, I think, the fairness of knowing just exactly what the next step is in this drama that we are playing out here on this very critical issue.

And by not having an answer today, I think we do a disservice not only to ourselves and the American people but to the people who care the most about this issue and who have really staked out a good part of their social activism on reforming this very sad system that we have in our society.

So the gentleman is absolutely right. If they know, they certainly have not told me. I think the only folks that know are the leadership on the other side, and they have refused to share these discussions with us, and it is disturbing.

Let me yield one other time, the Chair has been generous with time, and then I will end this discussion.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Maine.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. As one of the cochairs of the bipartisan freshman effort, the freshmen on both sides of the aisle have been working on this for a very long period of time, and the Democrats, in particular, have over 30 freshmen on this bill.

What we are concerned about is the commitment made in the press release issued by the leadership on April 22, 1998, which said, "Campaign finance reform will be brought to the floor in May and fully debated under an open rule." One of our concerns about any delay, any slippage in that schedule, is that delay here means there is less time for the Senate to take up whatever we do if we are successful in passing reform here.

That is why this is not just an academic issue. It is not just an issue that matters here in the House, but matters to the success or failure of campaign reform this year. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleagues for their comments and I hope they will be noted by the majority.

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce we have concluded legislative business for the week.

The House will next meet on Monday, May 11, at 2:00 p.m. for a pro forma session. There will be no legislative business and no votes that day.

On Tuesday, May 12, the House will meet at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour and at 2:00 p.m. for legislative business.

On Tuesday, we will consider a number of bills under suspension of the rules, a list of which will be distributed to Members' offices. Members should note that we do not expect any recorded votes before 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12.

On Wednesday, May 13, and Thursday, May 14, the House will meet at 10:00 a.m. to consider the following legislation:

H.R. 3494—The Child Protection and Sexual Predator Punishment Act of 1998;

H.R. 3534—The Mandates Information Act of 1998;

H.R. 10—The Financial Services Competition Act of 1997; and

H.R. 2431—The Freedom from Religious Persecution Act of 1998; and

H.R. 512—The New Wildlife Refuge Reauthorization Act.

Mr. Speaker, we hope to conclude legislative business for the week on Thursday, May 14. The House will not be in session on Friday, May 15.

I would like to take this opportunity to note that we will have a lot of important legislation on our plate next week. It may be necessary to work late on Wednesday evening in order to ensure a reasonable getaway time on Thursday.

□ 1545

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. NEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. COBURN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BONIOR addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FOX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FOX addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BENTSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BENTSEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES PETER THOBÆ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY. Today, Mr. Speaker, America lays to rest an excellent journalist and a better father. It was with great sadness that the friends of Charles Peter Thobæ learned that he had passed away Monday, May 4, in Houston, Texas.

A journalism graduate of Boston University, Charles was a reporter with the Houston Chronicle for 11 years and an editor of the Texas Churchman for 25. Believing in faith and his community, he served on various charitable boards and was a very active member of Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church.

During his 40 years in public relations, he did free-lance writing, including traveling, writing, and op-ed pieces for both the Houston Post and the Chronicle. Recently, Charles Thobæ also reviewed books for the Chronicle, specializing in contemporary history, military affairs, and sometimes thrillers.

David Langworthy, who is the Chronicle's Outlook editor, remarked, "He had an eye for the human and the personal. He was able to put those personalities into prose that brought our readers insights that were valuable."

His family is a special one. He was born December 9, 1930, in New Rochelle, New York, to Kathryn and Albert Thobæ. He is survived by his beloved wife, Miriam Banks Thobæ; his beloved daughters, Frances Kathryn, Sarah Banks, and Carol Ellen Thobæ. He is also survived by his mother, Kathryn Thobæ of Dennis, Massachusetts.

His daughter, I have had the pleasure of working with her in my congressional office. She recently said of her father, "He remained dedicated to people, the literary world, and religion his whole life. Everybody who knew him loved him, and he made a profound impact on everyone's life."

We celebrate his life and mourn his passing today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. CLAYTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, today is the National Day of Prayer. This Nation and each of us individually would be far better off if we all spent more time in prayer. There are very few people in this country who would disagree with that.

Certainly our Founding Fathers believed in prayer. Most of them came here in large part to get freedom of re-

ligion, not freedom from religion. Yet, beyond a belief in prayer, many other issues of faith are very contentious. But there is more common ground than the vocal minority sometimes would have us believe.

Three or four years ago, William Raspberry, the great Washington Post columnist, wrote a really outstanding column on some of these issues. He asked a very important question. Mr. Speaker, when he wrote, "Is it not just possible that antireligious bias, masquerading as religious neutrality, is costing this Nation far more than we have been willing to acknowledge?" Let me repeat that quote from William Raspberry, "Is it not just possible that antireligious bias, masquerading as religious neutrality, is costing this Nation far more than we have been willing to acknowledge?"

In this same column, Mr. Raspberry then told of a Jewish talk show host who had said that for those who thought there was no place for God in the public life of this Nation, he wished they would ask themselves this question: If they were walking late one night in the roughest section of one of our Nation's largest cities and they heard footsteps approaching rapidly from behind and they turned and saw four strapping, well-built young men, would they not be relieved to know that these young men were just returning from a Bible study?

We open up every session of the House and Senate with prayer; and we have rabbis, priests, ministers from all faiths and there has never been a problem about it. Yet, for some reason, we do not allow our schoolchildren the same privilege. And the problems of the schools have grown much worse over the last 25 or 30 years.

A really fine column on religious tolerance, Mr. Speaker, was written a few weeks ago by nationally syndicated columnist Charley Reese. I would like to read this column into the RECORD at this point.

This is what Mr. Reese wrote:

Want to know the definition of a stone-cold bigot? It is anybody who is offended by the sight and sound of someone practicing, expressing, or proclaiming his religious faith. Such people are not only bigots, they are the south end of a horse traveling north. Their intolerance is exceeded only by their ignorance of the Constitution.

The first amendment forbids the establishment of an official church or religion. Period. Nothing else. To establish an official church or religion would require legislation so designating it, and taxes and appropriations to subsidize it. That's all THOMAS Jefferson meant when he said there was a wall of separation between church and state.

Mr. Reese continued:

But when a private individual or a public official prays in a school or any other public place, he is not establishing an official church. For someone to say that the mere sight of a Christian proclaiming his faith in a public place is offensive is to indict himself as a vicious bigot and an inconsiderate, self-centered boor. These boors apparently have no conception of civility and respect for others. They act as if religious faith were an infectious disease.