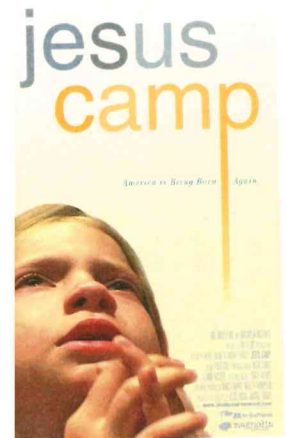


- 11 The documentary Jesus Camp was released in 2006. Find out more about this film and the camp. Focus on the goals of the camp and the film as well as the camp leaders' methods of reaching them. → S29



Advertisement for the documentary film

The political influence of the evangelicals in the US → pol. right

The left often complains that evangelicals have too much influence in American life. But evangelicals themselves complain that the politicians they help elect leave much of their agenda undone. So what impact has the religious right actually had on public policy? An overview:

Judges

This may be the religious right's biggest policy success. George W. Bush not only named two seemingly conservative US Supreme Court justices, but he has also made more than 250 lifetime appointments to lower federal courts – more than a quarter of the federal judiciary. (Now more than half the federal judiciary has been appointed by GOP presidents.) Those judges will rule on issues such as teaching “intelligent design”, whether the Pledge of Allegiance can contain the words “under God” and which abortion restrictions are constitutional. [...]

Part 2

The religious right hasn't been able to pass a constitutional amendment allowing organized school prayer. It has also had little success implementing a widespread voucher program. Several state voucher programs were declared unconstitutional, though there is a small demonstration program in Washington, DC. Courts have allowed voluntary student-initiated prayer as well as Bible study after school, but they have also ruled that schools cannot require teaching intelligent design alongside evolution.

Part 3

Senator Jesse Helms, who headed the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, gave evangelicals influence over foreign policy in the early 1990s when he tried to “privatize” US foreign aid by directing funds to his favorite faith-based charities, like Samaritan's Purse. Evangelicals have pushed for greater engagement in Africa to deal with issues like famine, the civil war in Sudan and AIDS. They pushed for the passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act, which allows aid to be distributed by charitable organizations, including faith-based groups. They've lobbied for tightened laws on sexual trafficking; Bush has boosted funding and beefed up anti-trafficking laws. The Christian right has also zealously supported Israel. [...]

Part 4

In 1996, Congress passed the federal Defense of Marriage Act and President Clinton signed it. But after Massachusetts legalized gay marriage in 2004, states across the country rushed to pass their own DOMAs and amend their constitutions to prohibit same-sex unions. Though the right has been very successful at the state level – there are now only five states without some kind of ban on gay marriage – it failed to get even 50 votes in the Senate for the Marriage Protection Amendment. [...]

Part 5

President George W. Bush's 2001 policy allowed federal spending on stem-cell “lines” already in existence but prohibited funding for any research that destroys

- 35 new embryos. Several states, including California and New Jersey, have passed initiatives to encourage state-funded research. [...]

Part 6

Courts have been ambivalent on this one, partly due to the shifting majorities on the Supreme Court. Last year the high court ruled that the Ten Commandments can be displayed in public if they are part of a historical display, but not as a stand-alone religious symbol.

Debra Rosenberg, Newsweek, November 13, 2006

- 12 Give the sections headings as they might have appeared in Newsweek.
- 13 a) [Icon] Read through the text again and decide how successful the religious right has been on the various issues. Indicate your assessment with 1 for very successful and 4 for completely unsuccessful. Then compare your results with a partner and discuss your answers. → S5
b) [Icon] Which lobbies in Germany have similar power?
- 14 [Icon] Mediation: You have entered a discussion with an American exchange partner about American and German religion and politics. You have learnt a lot about the religious right in the US during your discussion.
Partner 1: You are the American partner who needs to find out where the current US government (President, Congress, Supreme Court) stands on the issues mentioned in this text and how likely it is going to be influenced by the evangelicals.
Partner 2: You are the German partner who needs to find out where politicians from the various parties in Germany stand on the issues of gay marriage, religious symbols in schools and stem cell research. Conduct some research so you can explain it to your partner. Which German party is closest to the political agenda of the American evangelicals? After doing your research start the conversation.
- 15 Create a mind map for what you have learnt about the significance of the evangelicals in the USA. Take these two graphs into account as well. Then give a five-minute presentation. → S27

³⁶to shift to change
³⁹stand-alone isolated

FACT FILE

The evangelicals reemerged in the 1970s in response to what they saw as an undermining of traditional Christian values by the hippie movement. They call for a literal interpretation of the Bible and preachers like Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson have used television to spread God's word in the Electronic Church. Several US Presidents such as Jimmy Carter and recently George W. Bush have been strongly influenced by the religious right.

against hippies

Bible

communication

WORD BANK

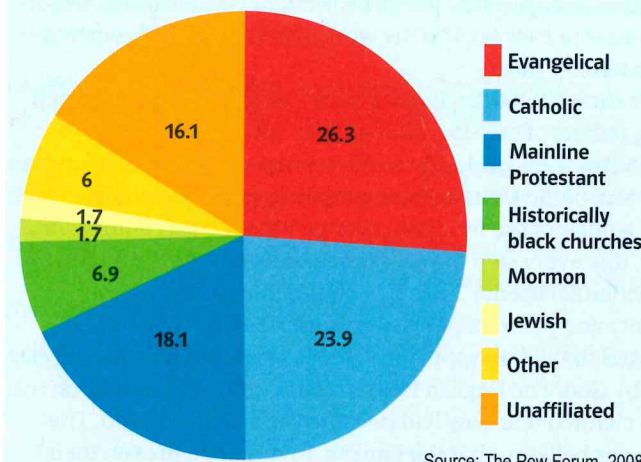
Stating one's opinion
to be in favour of • to side with • to propagate • to advocate • to call for to oppose • to disapprove of • to raise objections to • to condemn • to criticise

failures

successes

⁴judiciary all judges of a country
⁵GOP “Grand Old Party” = the Republican Party
⁹to implement to carry out
¹⁰voucher program here: program that allows children to attend private – including religious – schools at taxpayers' expense
¹⁸charity an organisation that raises money for the poor or handicapped
²²trafficking buying and selling illegally
²³to boost to increase
²³to beef up (inf) to improve
²⁴zealous enthusiastic

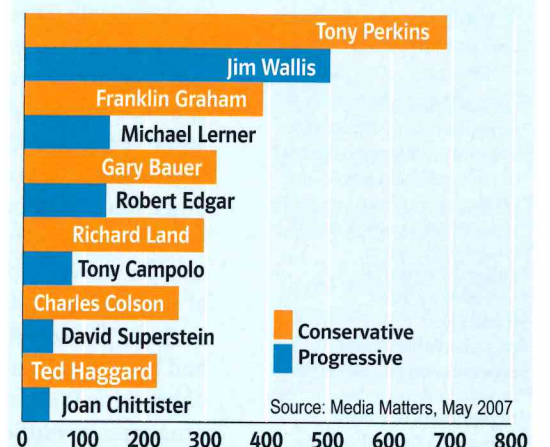
Religious composition of the US



Source: The Pew Forum, 2008

Number of quotes/interviews/mentions

of religious leaders in major newspapers and on major TV networks from Nov. 3, 2004–Dec. 31, 2006



Source: Media Matters, May 2007