

What You Should Know About United Methodism's Washington Lobby Office

Nearly ninety years ago, Methodists built the Methodist Building on Capitol Hill to advocate for temperance. Today, the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) lobbies for a wide range of political initiatives: unrestricted abortion rights, homosexual causes, a larger federal welfare and regulatory state, and reflexive opposition to U.S. foreign and military policies. Over 2005-2008, it has enjoyed tremendous increases in its share of the World Service Fund, which rose by an annual average of nearly 15% while other important ministries have been under-funded.

With a \$5 million annual budget and two dozen staffers, GBCS speaks exclusively from the political left. Meanwhile, polling has shown that most United Methodists are moderate or conservative. Often, GBCS officials are prone to intemperate rhetoric. In 2005, the General Secretary of GBCS compared Christian schools and home schoolers in the U.S. to Islamist "madrasahs." He has denounced the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces as an "oppressive imperial army."

Sometimes, GBCS oppose or ignore United Methodism's official positions on key issues. In 2004, the GBCS General Secretary complained that the General Conference's stance on homosexuality was "clearly a step backward." And he lashed out at "Central Conference delegates, particularly those from Africa" for voting against liberalizing sexual standards.

This year, as at past General Conferences, GBCS is urging United Methodism to abandon its teaching that sex is for marriage between man and woman. Specifically, GBCS is urging deletion of the church's Social Principles language that calls homosexual practice "incompatible with Christian teaching." And it is urging that the church revoke its support for "laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

Since 9-11, GBCS has refused to acknowledge the United Methodist stance that war is sometimes a regrettable alternative to genocide, tyranny and genocide. Instead, GBCS has pretended that United Methodism is a pacifist denomination. Despite United Methodism's international diversity, the GBCS is largely focused on U.S. politics.

We are urging a new purpose statement for GBCS (Petition #81304, p. 198 of ADCA Vol. 2) that would emphasize: substance abuse and gambling, persecution of Christians globally, defending marriage and the family, sanctity of all vulnerable human life, pornography and degrading media, sex trafficking, peaceful mediation in conflicts, and economic growth and opportunity for the poor, especially in the Global South, where United Methodism is growing.

We urge that GBCS become an international agency that truly represents the whole church.