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October 16, 2006

**For Immediate Release**

## **ALLOWING TORTURE: Has America Lost Its Soul?** **Unveiling a Powerful Billboard on I-95 in Stratford and I-84 in Waterbury**

### **Religious Group Launches Publicity Campaign Targeting Connecticut Legislators who Voted in Favor of Military Commissions Act**

(Stratford, CT) With President Bush preparing to sign the Military Commissions Act of 2006 into law on Tuesday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice, a statewide interfaith network of religious leaders and people of faith established in 2002 is launching a publicity campaign to make sure Connecticut residents know which members of the state's congressional delegation voted for the bill.

Today, Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice teamed up with IWagePeace.org to unveil of a billboard on Interstate 95 in Stratford. Numerous religious leaders from throughout the state were in attendance for this occasion. The message "**They Voted To Allow Torture**" will reach 100,000 people per day on the billboard measuring 14 feet high and 48 feet wide which faces southbound traffic between exits 30 and 31. In addition, a second billboard will be placed on I-84 in Waterbury.

"Torture is a moral issue; it is also a profoundly religious issue, for it degrades the image of God in each person. That religious groups in Connecticut and across the nation are so unified in their opposition to torture and to the provisions of this legislation is unprecedented. We believe the soul of our nation is at stake, and as religious leaders we are called to speak out and hold our government accountable for a law that will leave us all with blood on our hands" said the Rev. Kathleen McTigue, a member of the RTPV Steering Committee.

Last month Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice (RTPV) organized the state's religious leaders to speak out against the legislation, calling upon Connecticut's congressional delegation to stand firmly opposed to any weakening of the United States' commitment to Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. With the passage of the legislation, they now seek to hold those who voted in favor of the legislation – Senator Lieberman and Representatives Johnson, Shays and Simmons – accountable for their votes.

"As a religious voter, I am concerned about moral values and the rule of law," said John Humphries, a Quaker who is a member of the RTPV Steering Committee. Humphries noted that the new law guts the War Crimes Act, giving immunity to civilians who ordered or tolerated prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere since 9/11. "Violations of the Geneva Conventions are no longer criminal offenses under US law," Humphries said. "Torture is an issue that rises above partisan politics and should always be illegal. What we needed was moral leadership, but these politicians failed to provide it."

Bruce A. Barrett, editor, IWagePeace.org and partner, Barrett Outdoor Communications, Inc., said "This is an issue I feel very strongly about, and I'm pleased to make this part of our IWagePeace.org project. We think it is important to make people aware of how their elected representatives voted on this bill. People need to understand that five former Joint Chiefs – General Colin Powell, John Shalikashvili, John Vessey, Hugh Skelton, and William Crowe – joined 48 other military leaders and openly stated in writing that this bill had no military and posed a real threat to our men and women in uniform\*. Yet Senator Lieberman and Representatives Shays, Johnson, and Simmons overruled the generals and voted in favor of the bill. Thanks to these politicians, we have "look tough" legislation that endangers our military, affirms interrogation techniques of no military value and erodes our basic human rights. The people have a right to know these things."

**For more information: go to [www.reclaimingthepropheticvoice.org](http://www.reclaimingthepropheticvoice.org) and [www.iwagepeace.org](http://www.iwagepeace.org).**

\*<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/media/etn/2006/alert/259/>