“STAND YOUR GROUND” JUST TIP OF ICEBERG FOR BAXLEY’S RACISM, RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE AND GUN FETISH

Dennis Baxley

The tragic murder of Trayvon Martin has focused attention on Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” law sponsored originally by Representative Dennis Baxley, who is serving for a second time in a district just south of the one in which I reside. Baxley has long been a symbol of all of the wrongs that ultra-conservative Republicans in Florida represent.

During his first time in Florida’s House from 2000 until he was term-limited out in 2007, Baxley distinguished himself with his outright racism:

> Baxley is currently a lonely voice opposing efforts to drop the state’s official song, “The Old Folks at Home.”

A compromise eventually revised the lyrics to remove the most offensive portion and added a

state anthem. Here is what Baxley didn't want removed:

> *Oh! darkeys, how my heart grows weary,*
>
> *Far from de old folks at home.*

As if that were not enough, Baxley had another racist project at the same time:

> Baxley is also advocating a new specialty license plate that would showcase the Confederate flag, with proceeds going to a group he belongs to, the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Baxley, NRA lobbyist Marion Hammer and the NRA teamed with ALEC to spread "Stand Your Ground" to 21 states. But "Stand Your Ground" is just one of several gun bills Baxley has developed. On his website he also touts a bill that " eliminated the prohibition on firearms in national forests and state parks". He also sponsored a bill that would have allowed employees to bring their guns to work, but it was defeated in committee in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shootings.

Baxley's image among Florida Republicans is that of an upstanding Baptist Sunday School teacher. He even spent his time out of the House leading Florida's Christian Coalition, a position from which he spoke out in 2008 about Barack Obama's exposure to Islam when he was younger:

> "He's pretty scary to us," he said. "I think his Muslim roots and training – while they try to minimize it – it's there."
>
> Asked what he meant, Baxley pointed to Obama's childhood stint in Indonesia and his Muslim relatives.
>
> /snip/
>
> "That concerns me particularly in the period of history we are living in, when

> there’s an active movement by radical Muslims to occupy us,” Baxley said of Obama’s background. “That whole way of life is all about submission. It concerns me that someone rooted in those beginnings, how it might have affected their outlook. That’s what scary for me.”

Baxley’s fear of Obama’s potential “submission” to Islam is particularly ironic, given his complete submission to a distorted radical Christian fundamentalism and gun worship. Back in 2005, Baxley was especially deranged in trying to help David Horowitz fight against fictional persecution of fundamentalist conservatives in academic settings. In the process, Baxley’s bill would have set academic freedom back immensely (garbled formatting in article left as is):

> In his statement to the committee, Horowitz compared universities in America to those in the ⍰third world,⍰ and said a large minority of professors don⍰t behave like professionals in the classroom.
>
> Casting the ⍰crisis⍰ in higher education as a struggle between ⍰leftist totalitarianism⍰ and ⍰mainstream values,⍰ Horowitz cited anecdotes about students being marked down for disagreeing with professors in class. He divulged neither the names of these students nor their professors.
>
> Baxley also asserted that the bill would not lead to lawsuits, even though a legislative staff analysis warned the bill could allow students to sue their professors if they feel their views aren⍰t being respected.
>
> The analysis even recommends $4.2 million be spent to hire new lawyers for universities to fight such suits if the

> bill is passed.

Fortunately, Baxley's bill never passed and academic freedom was not removed in Florida.

Returning to "Stand Your Ground", Baxley is trying to claim that George Zimmerman was improperly cleared in Trayvon Martin's killing:

> As the prime sponsor of this legislation in the Florida House, I'd like to clarify that there is nothing in the law that provides for the opportunity to pursue and confront individuals. It simply lets those who would be victims use force in self-defense.
>
> /snip/
>
> But media reports about Trayvon Martin's death indicate that Zimmerman's unnecessary pursuit and confrontation of Martin elevated the prospect of a violent episode, and does not seem to be an act of self defense as defined by the law.

Baxley is clearly squirming now as the impact of what he has done begins to hit home. He was warned of bad outcomes when the bill was passed:

> But John F. Timoney, Miami's police chief, called the bill unnecessary and dangerous. Chief Timoney, who has successfully pushed his police officers to use less deadly force, said many people, including children, could become innocent victims. The bill could make gun owners, including drivers with road rage or drunken sports fans who get into fights leaving ball games, assume they have "total immunity," he said.
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> "Whether it's trick-or-treaters or kids playing in the yard of someone who doesn't want them there or some drunk guy stumbling into the wrong house," Chief Timoney said, "you're encouraging

> people to possibly use deadly physical force where it shouldn’t be used.”

Timoney’s prediction was spot on:

> State figures indicate that justified use of deadly force by private citizens is on the upswing.
>
> Florida Department of Law Enforcement statistics show that before the law was enacted in 2005, there were about 13 justified killings each year by citizens from 2000 to 2005. Between 2006 and 2010, the average has risen to 36 justified killings each year.

That’s over a hundred deaths in Florida alone directly attributable to Baxley’s “Christian” values in action [see comments 8 and 9 for an explanation of the addition of quotation marks around “Christian” after the post was published].