Baptists oppose tax credits

SHREVEPORT (AP) — The Louisiana Baptist Convention approved resolutions Wednesday opposing federal tax credits for tuition payments and a United States ambassador to the Vatican.

Lois Hood, a convention "messenger" from New Orleans, said the convention sent telegrams to U.S. Sens. J. Bennett Johnston and Russell Long expressing concern over the tax credits proposal.

In part, the resolutions said:

"Louisiana Baptists have traditionally expressed their opposition to any form of tax tuition credits, believing it to be a violation of the principle of separation of church and state, and it is widely believed that tax tuition credits to private and parochial schools would further weaken the United States public school system."

The resolution on the ambassador also cited the principle, saying the Vatican was primarily a Catholic religious entity and "We desire to faithfully protect the freedom of religion that comes from the separation of church and state."

Other resolutions included one encouraging "all judicious community efforts to educate and combat the increasing misuse of drugs" and one opposing consideration of further legalized gambling in Louisiana.

Another resolution passed by the LBC messengers expressed support for the Louisiana Moral and Civic Foundation and "blue laws" which require businesses to close on Sundays.

Only one resolution was changed on the convention floor. It dealt with raffles, lotteries and games of chance and called "attention to the relationship of these practices to gambling."

As amended to make the wording stronger, the resolution said, "We call attention to the fact that raffles, lotteries and games of chance are forms of gambling and that we oppose the further legislation of these as well as other forms of gambling."

"The first resolution just wasn't strong enough," said the Rev. Richard Luebbert of First Baptist in New Orleans, who offered the amendment.

"It's all gambling, even the bingo people play, and we have to accept that, whether we like it or not."

At Wednesday's closing session, the Rev. Reggie Ogea of First Baptist in Amite was elected second vice president of the convention.

He will serve with Raymond Boswell, a member of a Shreveport church, who was elected convention president Tuesday, and the Rev. Tommy French, pastor of Jefferson Baptist in Baton Rouge, who was elected first vice president.