

# Briefly noted

News in the [March 10, 2009](#) issue

**Leaders from 67 religious and humanitarian organizations** have asked President Obama to reconsider U.S. opposition to global treaties that prohibit the use and transfer of landmines and cluster munitions. “Reconsidering these two treaties—and eliminating the threat that U.S. forces might use weapons that most of the world has condemned—would greatly aid efforts to reassert our nation’s moral leadership,” the joint letter said February 10. The letter notes that Washington has supported operations to remove landmines, but said such efforts are “undermined” by nonparticipation in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. Episcopal presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori; Ronald Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action; Ken Hackett, president of Catholic Relief Services; and John H. Thomas, president of the United Church of Christ, are among the signers.

**The U.S. Senate defeated an amendment** to the economic stimulus bill on February 5 that would have allowed federal funding for renovations at college buildings that are used for religious activity. Senator Jim DeMint (R., S.C.) proposed the amendment after voicing criticism of a stimulus provision that says funds for colleges and universities could not be used for modernization or renovation of buildings where “sectarian instruction” or “religious worship” occurs. “This is a direct attack on students of faith, and I’m outraged Democrats are using an economic stimulus bill to promote discrimination,” DeMint said after the 54-43 vote defeating the amendment. Church-state groups, however, welcomed the vote. “The Senate has voted to reaffirm an important American principle—that religious groups should pay their own way and not expect funding from the taxpayer,” said Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

**A prominent member of a conservative Catholic movement** known as the Legion of Christ confirmed that the movement’s founder had fathered at least one illegitimate child and sexually molested teenage boys. The admissions concerned the late Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legion of Christ and its affiliated lay movement, Regnum Christi. An internal legion investigation has determined that

Maciel “fathered a child, who is now in her early 20s,” wrote priest-correspondent Thomas D. Williams in an e-mail message to the *Our Sunday Visitor* blog on February 5. An American who teaches at the legion’s Regina Apostolorum University in Rome, Williams is also a regular analyst for CBS television.

**More than a year after Richard Roberts resigned** as president of Oral Roberts University amid allegations of lavish spending, the charismatic Christian university in Tulsa has hired a new president. Mark Rutland, president of Southeastern University, a Christian liberal arts college in Lakeland, Florida, since 1999, will take the helm of ORU on July 1, the university’s board of trustees said January 28. Rutland will be the third president in ORU’s 46-year history.