

## Evangelicals rev up voters

*Christian activists working to ensure Bush's re-election*

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Associated Press

Sept. 25, 2004 12:00 AM

WASHINGTON - With choruses of amens, Christian activists on Friday affirmed that they have the power, with a little prayer and a lot of legwork, to ensure that President Bush stays in the White House.

"I feel a responsibility," said Bob Paquet, a pastor from Hankins, N.Y., "to use what influence I can so that the values I believe in, biblical values, will be upheld."

Paquet was one of about 1,000 people attending a Christian Coalition of America conference, where they are being trained in organizing voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts in their churches and neighborhoods. He said he'll be helping transport people to the polls.

Christian Coalition President Roberta Combs said that four years ago the coalition sent out 70 million voter guides and made 1 million get-out-the-vote phone calls.

She said those numbers may go down this time as the group concentrates on the battleground states.

She said that 87 percent of evangelicals voted for Bush in 2000 and that the focus this time is the estimated 4 million who stayed home.

"Four years ago, they weren't sure who George Bush was," Combs said. "This time they are sure."

The Rev. Jerry Falwell said the numbers, if they can be mobilized, are on their side. He said that there are 80 million evangelicals now and that that will grow to 100 million in five to seven years.

"We're the only constituency growing within the Republican Party," Falwell said.

Alexia Kelley, director of religious outreach for the Democratic National Committee, said that Republicans do not have a lock on evangelicals and that John Kerry's presidential campaign will be seeking their vote in every state.

Evangelicals, she said, "are disillusioned because of the compassion gap." Millions of Americans have lost health insurance or jobs, she said, and "they are looking to John Kerry."

After listening to inspirational speeches Thursday and Friday from a long line of conservatives, including House Speaker Dennis Hastert, Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, Sen. Orrin Hatch and Falwell, the conference participants today are to attend seminars on election laws, voter education, becoming a church liaison and other ways to get like-minded Christians to the polls.

"There is only one pro-life party in the United States of America," said Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., the newly chosen head of GOP conservatives in the House. "There is one candidate in this race who is prepared to lead with moral courage."