

# Panel offers advice to politicians

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Election-year advice offered recently by a bishop, a group of children and a panel of speakers included suggestions that voters take the responsibility to think critically about the issues at stake and that candidates pay much more attention to needs of children and their families.

Panelists at a March 24 Georgetown University forum urged voters to demand higher standards from their elected representatives and told leaders that they should insist on greater responsibility from their constituents.

"We need a balance of responsibilities with the rights we take for granted," said William A. Galston, a professor at the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland and one-time issues director for former Vice President Walter Mondale's campaign.

Galston was joined on the panel by Jesuit Father John P. Langan, senior

fellow at Georgetown's Woodstock Theological Center, and Rep. David E. Price, D-N.C. The panelists discussed values underlying political issues of the presidential election.

Americans are all too willing to hold their elected leaders accountable for what they dislike, but they retreat when asked to take responsibility for the consequences of what they do want, Price said.

"Citizens have an obligation to think about issues that go beyond their immediate desires," he said, noting that he has more respect for lobbyists who have a sense of the broad public interest rather than focusing only on a single interest.

Price acknowledged that as an elected leader he also has a responsibility to teach voters about tough issues so they can make educated choices and understand what steps are ultimately taken by government.

Children from around the country made an effort at educating candidates about their needs as part of a presentation March 23 on the well-being of children in the third annual "Kids Count Data Book."

"Whoever reads this, when was the last time you saw a guy jump from a second-story window just to get away from the cops?" wrote Garrett Stubbs, a 13-year-old from Laurel Springs, N.J.

"Violence, drugs and the economy are the only problems I know about, and are the only problems affecting people I know, and my family," he added. "I hope our next president can fix them."

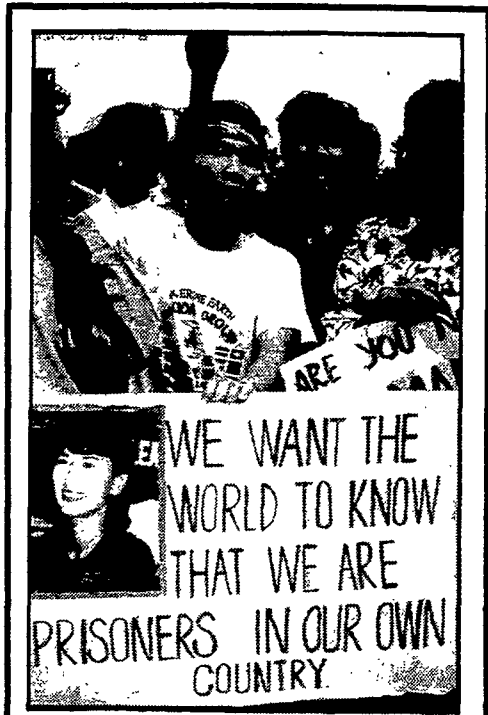
Raul Amavisca, a 13-year-old Hispanic from Phoenix, said he would like to see the next president "abolish all sorts of racism."

Judith H. Weitz, national coordinator for Kids Count, said the 1992 "report card" gives a negative response to the question, "Are children and their families better off today than they were a decade ago; or even five years ago?"

"More families today are earning less, working more, have less time, fewer family and neighborhood support systems and more stress in their lives," she said. "Our failure to be a family-friendly society has taken an unmistakable toll on family life and children."

If politicians and voters followed the advice of Bishop Michael D. Pfeifer of San Angelo, Texas, every proposal, policy or political platform would be measured by how it touches people.

"The common good is shaped by the moral convictions and active commitment of each one of us," Bishop Pfeifer said in a column in his diocesan newspaper, the *West Texas Angelus*.



AP/Wide World Photos  
**BURMESE PROTEST** — Members of the "All Burma Students Union" protest against the military regime in their homeland of New Dehli, India March 27. In commemoration of Burma's Resistance Day, the students asked their country's military to step down and pave the way to democracy. The poster shows Burma's Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who is being held under house-arrest by the Burmese regime.

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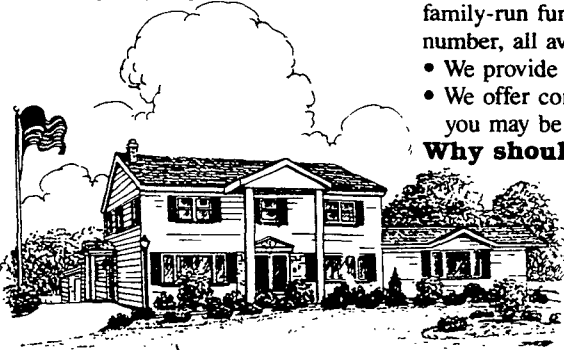
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