



FAMILY COUNCIL

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**APRIL 2017
UPDATE LETTER**

DEAR FRIENDS,

The other day as I was reviewing a slate of bills that have been proposed at the Arkansas Legislature, it occurred to me that **there are so many ways that a church can be a force for good in a community.** Churches serve their neighborhoods—especially the poor and needy. Churches are often some of the first to provide for the victims of natural disasters, such as floods and tornadoes.

I think we would all agree that Bible-believing churches share the gospel with nonbelievers and make their communities better. But what if I told you even a church building itself can make a community more wholesome? What if I told you those four walls do more than give believers a place to meet—they actually keep certain types of evil out of our neighborhoods?

Under Arkansas law, adult-oriented businesses cannot operate within 1,000 feet of a church. Liquor stores, likewise, cannot be located within 1,000 feet of a church. Penalties for certain crimes—such as illegal drug deals and drug use—are enhanced if they occur within 1,000 feet of a church. “Medical marijuana” stores cannot operate within 1,500 feet of a church, and marijuana farms cannot operate within 3,000 feet of a church.

I realize the “church” is more than just four walls and a steeple. Believers are the true church. I also realize you can’t completely rid a community of sin. However, **just having those four walls and a steeple in your neighborhood repels some types of evil.** It keeps certain vices away from our children and our neighbors. It makes our communities more wholesome—often without anyone noticing.

I believe most people probably take the good things churches bring to Arkansas for granted. **But if the churches disappeared—along with all the good things they bring to the table—people would notice.**

Our world is wrestling with some serious questions right now. From top to bottom, many days it feels like our nation is losing its mind. It reminds me of the prophet Amos, who wrote, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12, KJV).

Now more than ever we need churches to engage the culture. Churches are already a powerful force for good simply by being present in our state. Many churches run food pantries that help families facing physical hunger. We need believers to help those starving for the Truth of God’s Word as well.

Now more than ever we need churches to engage the culture. In the past six weeks Family Council has issued more calls to action than I can count. We have asked people to call their state representatives and senators time and time again. That’s because our lawmakers need to hear the truth about the important issues they are voting on. They need to hear it from Family Council, but they also need to hear it from their neighbors back home.

And now let me tell you a little more about what we are doing to help believers engage the culture—and about the legislation we are working on at the Arkansas Capitol.

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MY THOUGHTS: POWER, PRINCIPLE, AND POLITICS

In February I attended a conference in Florida for conservative leaders. One of the speakers at the conference made a comment to this effect: If our leaders are not driven by principle, they will be driven by power.

I believe he is correct. More and more I see the love of power replacing the love of principle. I don't believe it's just my imagination. I can honestly say this has been the coarsest, most grueling legislative session I've ever been part of. One Republican senator recently chewed out a member of my staff, because Family Council was opposing one of her bills. She could not understand why we would oppose one of her bills when she had supported so many of our pro-life bills.

The answer is simple: We're driven by principle. We support good legislation and oppose bad legislation no matter who sponsors it. Sometimes that puts us at odds with very powerful individuals or groups, but when you want to stand on principle, that goes with the territory.

The Arkansas Legislature Is a Lot Like Junior High

When it comes to legislation, the 2017 Arkansas Legislature has done a lot. Lawmakers have passed some excellent, pro-life bills, which you can read about on the enclosed insert. They've filed bills protecting rights of conscience and religious freedom. And they've done really good work for home schoolers. We are proud to work hard to help lawmakers pass so many good pieces of legislation.

When it comes to politics, however, the 2017 Arkansas Legislature looks a lot like a junior high school. Lawmakers have splintered into different "cliques." Some want nothing to do with you if you aren't part of their immediate circle of friends. Grown men and women shout at each other on the social media and via text messages instead of simply discussing their differences in committee meetings.

Not every lawmaker is behaving this way, but needless to say, this makes our work very difficult at times. One way to overcome this is to get voters back home involved in the legislative process. Now more than ever our elected officials need to hear from you on a regular basis. You and I need to ask them to vote for good bills and oppose bad bills. We need to thank them when they do the right thing, and we need to respectfully share our disappointment when they vote poorly. Otherwise, popularity and power will drive the legislature.

Family Council Supports Privacy and Safety Act

Earlier this year I wrote that one of our priorities was passing a law protecting women and children from predators trying to gain access to public showers, locker rooms, restrooms, changing areas, and similar facilities. In March Senator Linda Collins-Smith (R - Pocahontas) filed S.B. 774, the Arkansas Physical Privacy and Safety Act. This is a good bill we are working hard to pass.

Arkansas has no specific law on the books to prevent men from entering restrooms, changing rooms, showers, or locker rooms designated for women or girls. Most people think it's already against the law for a man to enter a women's facility. It is not, but it should be. Little girls shouldn't have to deal with grown men in their restrooms. Boys shouldn't be allowed in the girl's locker room or showers at school.

S.B. 774 does not affect private businesses like Walmart or Target. It is narrowly tailored to apply to government property, such as public schools, state parks, and government buildings. It simply requires a person using a public shower, locker room, restroom, or similar facility on government property to use the facility that corresponds to the biological sex listed on his or her original birth certificate. It also provides reasonable accommodations for transgender individuals. **You can read about S.B. 774 and other bills on the enclosed insert.**

Bill Filed to Prevent Government Discrimination

Rep. Bob Ballinger (R - Hensley) has filed the Government Nondiscrimination Act, H.B. 2232. This bill prevents the State of Arkansas from discriminating against anyone who believes marriage ought to be the union of one man and one woman or that a person's sex is biologically determined at birth. This is a good bill that Family Council supports. In other states, Christian organizations and others

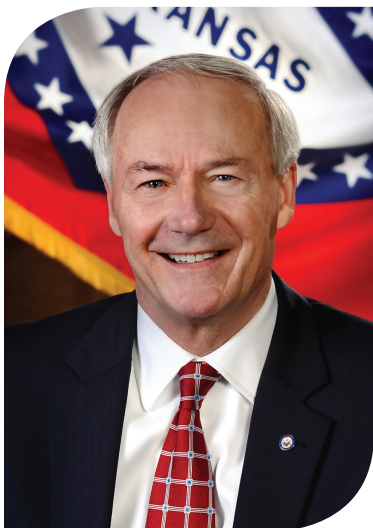
who oppose same-sex marriage have seen their tax status threatened, and counselors who believe it is unhealthy for a person to disagree with his or her biological sex have risked losing their accreditation. H.B. 2232 prevents those sorts of problems from occurring in Arkansas. **You can read about H.B. 2232 and our other bills on the enclosed insert.**

Gov. Hutchinson Persuades Lawmakers to Kill Conscience Protection Legislation

In March the Arkansas House Public Health Committee failed to pass H.B. 1628 by Rep. Brandt Smith (R - Jonesboro). This is a good bill that protects medical professionals, healthcare companies, and their employees from being forced to participate in medical procedures like abortion, birth control, or sex change operations that violate their consciences. It gives other healthcare employees and companies the same conscience protections currently enjoyed by doctors and hospitals. The bill strictly prohibited healthcare professionals from refusing to provide services based on race, sex, national origin, and the other protected classes.

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At least three members of Governor Asa Hutchinson's staff were at the committee meeting in opposition to the bill. In addition, the Arkansas Surgeon General—who serves at the pleasure of the governor—testified against the bill. This bill was filed in early February. The governor's staff had ample opportunity to work with the sponsor of the bill to address their concerns—which is something state officials normally do. Instead they waited until the day of the hearing to undermine the bill without working with the sponsor. One member of the House Public Health Committee said that he and other members of the committee were receiving text messages from the governor's staff during the debate urging them to vote against the bill. When I met with members of the governor's staff later, they admitted that they knew about the bill and they knew that Family Council supported it, but they failed to reach out to us or the bill's sponsor. Until now, it has been unheard of for an Arkansas Republican governor to orchestrate the defeat of a bill protecting rights of conscience.



Rep. Smith amended the bill trying to satisfy concerns expressed by members of the committee. When he attempted to present the bill again, leaders of the ACLU and individuals who claim to be transgender were there to contest the bill. Committee Chairman Jeff Wardlaw (R - Hermitage) refused to allow Rep. Smith to present the bill for a second time.

Left: Governor Asa Hutchinson

Lawmakers Seem Paralyzed on Marijuana Issue

Apparently one of medical marijuana's side-effects is paralysis in the State Capitol. So far legislators have received hundreds of phone calls from folks back home asking them to do things like ban marijuana-smoking and dangerous marijuana edibles; prohibit marijuana advertisements; and so on. Voters are practically demanding their lawmakers do the right thing.

In spite of all this, many legislators seem paralyzed when it comes to marijuana. Some lawmakers are afraid if they regulate "medical marijuana" too much, the marijuana industry will retaliate by legalizing recreational marijuana. They think if they leave medical marijuana alone, recreational marijuana won't come to Arkansas. Others are afraid of the power the marijuana industry wields. They know elected officials who stand up against the marijuana giants often see marijuana companies spend big money against them during election season.

Here's the unfortunate truth: Now that we have medical marijuana, it's only a matter of time before marijuana proponents try to legalize recreational marijuana as well. That's been true of other states. It will be true of Arkansas. Letting the marijuana industry run amok in our state won't prevent that. It will only put Arkansans at risk.

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So what are we supposed to do? How do we pass good laws restricting medical marijuana and keeping recreational marijuana out of Arkansas? Again, I think the key is voters. If our elected leaders know voters have their backs, they may stand up against the marijuana industry. I also think we need to pray that our elected officials would have courage and wisdom—and that they would do what is right.

Not every lawmaker is afraid of the marijuana industry. Several have sponsored good legislation regarding marijuana, and many others support that legislation. We are slowly making headway on a couple of key marijuana bills even as I write this letter. **You can read more on the enclosed insert.**



Above: Sen. Jason Rapert (R - Bigelow) presents S.B. 357 prohibiting marijuana-smoking on March 6.

We are Working with Rep. Leding to Ban Commercial Surrogacy

Several years ago we helped tighten the state's laws regarding commercial adoption. At the time, there were concerns loopholes in state law made it possible for women to be paid to put their children up for adoption. This essentially amounts to human trafficking, where children can be bought or sold. We were glad to help close those loopholes in Arkansas' adoption laws. This year we are working on a similar issue: Commercial surrogacy. Right now, surrogacy companies are running ads in Arkansas promising women \$50,000 or more to be artificially inseminated and bear children for wealthy individuals and couples. H.B. 2075 by Rep. Greg Leding (D - Fayetteville) effectively bans commercial surrogacy, as other states have done. This bill would not affect altruistic or benevolent surrogacy arrangements between friends or relatives, but it would prohibit commercial surrogacy arrangements in which people or companies pay tens of thousands of dollars for children. **You can read about H.B. 2075 and our other bills on the enclosed insert.**

We are Working to Pass Lottery Legislation

The typical state lottery gives about 30% of the money it makes to state education programs. That's incredibly inefficient. However, the Arkansas Lottery is much worse: Only about 16%–19% of the money it makes is paid toward its scholarship programs. The rest is spent on salaries, prizes, administrative costs, advertising, contracts, and so on. We are working with Sen. Joyce Elliott (D - Little Rock) and Rep. Warwick Sabin (D - Little Rock) on S.B. 583. This good bill would require the Arkansas Lottery to set aside at least 25% of its gross revenue for scholarships. While this is well below the national average, it's still a big step in the right direction. Personally, I think Arkansas would be better off without a lottery, but if we are going to have one, we need to do whatever we can to reduce the harm it causes and make sure it is operated responsibly. That's what S.B. 583 does. **You can read about this bill and others on the enclosed insert.**

PLEASE PRAY FOR US

We're in the home stretch of the Arkansas Legislature. Now more than ever, we need your prayers. Please pray that God would speed passage of good legislation as we wrap up the session. Pray that legislators would have wisdom and courage, and that they would support good legislation and oppose bad legislation.


WE NEED YOUR HELP

We've passed some really great pro-life legislation that will save the lives of unborn children. We've fought to protect Arkansans from a dangerous marijuana industry that is more concerned about its own profits than it is the safety and wellbeing of our neighbors. We've helped lawmakers pass some excellent home school bills. We've also blocked some really bad bills so far.

Fighting all these important legislative battles has taken a lot out of us. Your generous support helps us stay in the fight. That's why I hope you will send a generous, tax-deductible gift to Family Council today using the enclosed response card and return envelope.

Your support will help us continue to stand for human life, affirm religious liberty and rights of conscience, and push back against efforts to reshape our state. Thank you for standing with us. Please let me know if there is ever anything my staff or I can do for you.

Sincerely,



Jerry Cox, President

Thank you!!

P.S. The Arkansas Legislature will be winding down in the coming days. We are working as hard as we can to pass good, pro-life bills, strengthen religious liberty and rights of conscience, and push back against bad legislation in the time we have left at the Capitol. We're cramming as much as we possibly can into these final days of the legislature. Your generous support keeps us in the fight. Thank you for standing with us. **Thank you for standing with us.**