

FAMILY COUNCIL LEGISLATION THAT HAS PASSED

Infanticide. S.B. 148 (now Act 392 of 2017) by Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R - Branch) and Rep. Charlene Fite (R - Van Buren) protects babies who survive an abortion from being killed or denied medical treatment after birth.

Preventing the Buying and Selling of Baby Parts. H.B. 1566 by Rep. Kim Hammer (R - Benton) helps ensure aborted babies are respectfully buried or cremated and that their organs are not bought or sold for experimentation.

Clinic Inspections. H.B. 1428 (now Act 383 of 2017) by Rep. Robin Lundstrum (R - Elm Springs) and Sen. Scott Flippo (R - Bull Shoals) lets the Health Department immediately close abortion clinics that fail inspection. It clarifies that abortion clinics must be inspected at least annually. Laws like this one literally help states close abortion clinics.

Banning “Wrongful Birth” Lawsuits. S.B. 340 (now Act 385 of 2017) by Sen. Jeremy Hutchinson (R - Little Rock) and Rep. Aaron Pilkington (R - Clarksville) prohibits “wrongful birth” lawsuits. This good law affirms human life by prohibiting people from suing doctors and hospitals based on the claim a child should not have been born.

Sex-Selection Abortion Ban. H.B. 1434 by Rep. Charlie Collins (R - Fayetteville) and Sen. Missy Irvin (R - Mountain View) prohibits abortions performed due to the baby’s sex, also known as “sex-selection abortion.” It requires an abortionist to inform a woman seeking an abortion that sex-selection abortion is illegal. A doctor that performs a sex-selection abortion can be criminally prosecuted. This is a good bill that will make Arkansas a more pro-life state.

Simplifying the Notice of Intent. H.B. 1574 by Rep. Mark Lowery (R - Maumelle) simplifies and clarifies the Notice of Intent to Home School. It makes it easier for home schoolers to file their notice online or by mail. It reduces the amount of information required on the form. Parents will no longer be required to list their curriculum or class schedule. It replaces the waiver home schoolers are required to sign with an agreement that simply says the home school parent will be responsible for their child’s education. It also ensures local school districts do not try to force additional requirements on home school families.

“Tim Tebow” Law at Public Schools. Arkansas’ “Tim Tebow” law lets home schoolers participate in interscholastic activities at their local public schools. H.B. 1474 by Rep. Mark Lowery (R - Maumelle) lets home schoolers participate in interscholastic activities outside their resident school district if both school districts agree.

“Tim Tebow” Law at Private Schools. H.B. 1471 by Rep. Mark Lowery lets home schoolers participate in interscholastic activities at any private school within 25 miles of the student’s home if the private school is a member of the Arkansas Activities Association and agrees to let the home schooler participate.

Taking Academic Courses in Public School. H.B. 1208 by Rep. Mark Lowery (R - Maumelle) codifies state rules that let home schoolers take courses at their local public schools if the school is willing to enroll them.

Ban Marijuana Smoking. H.B. 1400 by Rep. Lundstrum (R - Elm Springs) prohibits marijuana smoking anywhere tobacco smoking is prohibited by law, such as restaurants; around children under age 14; in the presence of pregnant women; in a motor vehicle; and around anyone who might become high from the secondhand marijuana smoke. The bill also prohibits anyone under 21 from smoking marijuana.

FAMILY COUNCIL LEGISLATION BEING DEBATED

Banning Commercial Surrogacy. H.B. 2075 by Rep. Greg Leding (D - Fayetteville) bans commercial surrogacy; too many women are victims of human trafficking and find themselves being victimized by people who use them to produce babies for commercial contract purposes. This bill would not affect altruistic or benevolent surrogacy arrangements between friends or relatives, but would prohibit commercial surrogacy arrangements.

Protecting Rights of Conscience. This bill by Rep. Brandt Smith (R - Jonesboro) strengthens Arkansas’ protections for health-care workers and payers who have a conscientious conviction against participating in abortions and other activities that violate their consciences. No one should ever be forced to participate in or pay for abortion, abortion counseling, or abortion-inducing drugs. H.B. 1628 helps ensure that will not happen in Arkansas.

Abortion Clinic Reporting. Currently, Arkansas law requires abortion clinics to notify the State Crime Lab and appropriate authorities after performing an abortion on a girl under 14. This helps investigators determine if the girl has been the victim of sexual assault. H.B. 2024 by Rep. Sonia Barker (R - Smackover) increases the reporting requirements to include any girl under 17. This does two things: First, it makes it easier to prosecute crimes committed against minors. Second, it also makes it easier to determine if abortion clinics are following state laws regarding things such as parental consent obtained prior to an abortion.

Human Life Amendment. Sen. Jason Rapert (R - Conway) has filed SJR 9 calling for an Article V convention to add a pro-life amendment to the U.S. Constitution. If two-thirds of the state legislatures across the country pass resolutions identical to SJR 9, a constitutional convention will be called for the purpose of adding an amendment to the U.S. Constitution protecting human life from the moment of conception. This is an opportunity to push for a federal amendment that would abolish abortion and protect the right to life nationwide.

The Arkansas Physical Privacy and Safety Act. S.B. 774 by Sen. Linda Collins-Smith (R - Pocahontas) protects the physical privacy and safety of people using showers, locker rooms, restrooms, and similar facilities on government property—such as public schools or state parks. The bill was extensively debated in mid-March, but has not been voted on at this time. We are working hard to help Sen. Collins-Smith pass this good bill before the session ends.

Government Nondiscrimination Act. H.B. 2232 by Rep. Ballinger (R - Hensley) 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. In other states, organizations that support traditional marriage have seen their tax status or accreditation attacked by state officials. H.B. 2232 would prevent that from happening here.

Increasing Lottery Scholarships. The Arkansas Lottery typically gives around 16% - 19% of its gross revenue to the state's scholarship fund. S.B. 583 by Sen. Joyce Elliot (D - Little Rock) requires the Lottery to give at least 25% to scholarships. This will increase scholarship funding and require the Lottery to be run more responsibly.

Local Control on Marijuana. The Arkansas Medical Marijuana Amendment makes it extremely difficult for local municipalities to regulate the cultivation or sale of marijuana. H.B. 1391 by Rep. Robin Lundstrum (R - Elm Springs) lets a city council or quorum court regulate, zone, or prohibit marijuana farms and stores. This legislation gives local control back to the people of Arkansas. Unfortunately, the bill has failed to pass the House Rules Committee.

Regulating Medical Marijuana. H.B. 1991 by Rep. Lundstrum (R - Elm Springs) prohibits marijuana vending machines in Arkansas. It prohibits people from being under the influence of marijuana at a marijuana dispensary, which helps prevent marijuana dispensaries from functioning like marijuana bars. It also restricts marijuana edibles, and it requires marijuana to be sold in child-resistant packaging like containers used for medicine.

Ban Marijuana Edibles. Candy and drinks infused with marijuana routinely send people—especially children—to the hospital. Children are especially at risk of accidentally ingesting marijuana-infused food. H.B. 1392 by Rep. Lundstrum prohibits companies from making or selling edible marijuana in Arkansas. Medical marijuana users, caregivers, and hospitals would still be able to mix marijuana with food or drink to aid ingestion. This means a marijuana user could bake marijuana brownies at home, but gummy bears, candy bars, and soft drinks or alcoholic beverages infused with marijuana could not be manufactured and sold in marijuana stores. The bill failed to pass the Arkansas House of Representatives on March 20. We are working to pass it before the legislature adjourns.

GOOD LEGISLATION THAT HAS STALLED

Tax Breaks for Home Schoolers. Sen. Jane English (R - North Little Rock) has filed S.B. 112 letting home schoolers deduct a portion of qualified educational expenses—such as the cost of textbooks—from their income taxes. This has the potential to save home schoolers money on their income taxes. Unfortunately, this bill has stalled—probably because it is estimated the State of Arkansas will miss out on \$7 million in taxes if S.B. 112 passes.

Delaying Marijuana. S.B. 238 by Sen. Jason Rapert (R - Conway) delays implementation of Arkansas' "medical marijuana" program until marijuana's status changes under federal law. Right now there is no question Arkansas' marijuana amendment and related laws and programs blatantly violate federal law. Sen. Rapert's bill puts these programs on hold until federal law changes to make marijuana legal. Unfortunately this bill has made little progress.

Defining "Under the Influence" of Marijuana. Arkansas' marijuana amendment does not say what it means to be "under the influence" of marijuana. S.B. 130 by Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R - Branch) defines "under the influence of marijuana" as having five nanograms or more of THC—the active ingredient in marijuana—per milliliter of blood. This is similar to legislation on the books in other states. Unfortunately this bill has made little progress.

Senate Bill Banning Marijuana Smoking. This good bill by Sen. Jason Rapert (R - Conway) completely prohibits marijuana smoking in Arkansas. Unfortunately the bill twice failed to pass the Arkansas Senate. Similar legislation by Rep. Lundstrum is still being debated.

Senate Bill Banning Marijuana Edibles. This good bill by Sen. Stubblefield (R - Branch) bans marijuana edibles. Unfortunately the bill failed to pass the Senate. Similar legislation by Rep. Lundstrum is still being debated.

BAD LEGISLATION FAMILY COUNCIL IS OPPOSING

Gutting the Covenant Marriage Act of 2001. The Covenant Marriage Act of 2001 is one of the few laws the Arkansas Legislature ever passed specifically to address our state's alarming divorce rate. It creates an optional marriage license for couples who have gone through premarital counseling. Couples with a covenant marriage license cannot divorce as easily as others. H.B. 1361 by Rep. Nelda Speaks (R - Mountain Home) and Sen. Missy Irvin (R - Mountain View) adds "emotional abuse" to the list of reasons these couples may divorce, but fails to adequately define "emotional abuse." This practically guts the Covenant Marriage Act. The bill passed the House, and so far we have successfully opposed it in the Arkansas Senate.