



## FAMILY COUNCIL

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Dear Friends,

On the first day of the Arkansas Legislature, the Capitol Building always sounds like a hive of bees. The marble hallways and stairwells echo with talking and laughter, the click of footsteps, and the groaning of the House and Senate chambers' enormous, wooden doors as they open and close. Lobbyists in suits tap out text messages to colleagues on their smartphones. Newcomers shake hands and meet the folks they will be working with over the next three months. The whole building feels alive.

The Arkansas Legislature is a unique place—not only in Arkansas, but also among the fifty states. When I talk to colleagues from other parts of the country, they will mention in passing that their lawmakers curse, swear, or yell at each other in official, legislative meetings. That kind of thing practically never happens at the Arkansas Legislature. Especially during the first few days of the session, lawmakers are very friendly and diplomatic with each other—even their fiercest opponents. In that regard, I'm glad Arkansas' leaders still care about decorum and treating one another with respect.

As the weeks drag on, however, even the Arkansas Legislature can become a very dark place. The conversations don't usually devolve into shouting the way they might in other states, but our lawmakers come under tremendous pressure. Plenty of lawmakers have told me over the years that when they get back home from the session, they wonder why they cast some of the votes they did or why they didn't take a stronger stand on an issue. I remember one committee meeting a few years ago where a lawmaker was so exhausted and confused that he actually argued against his own bill that he was sponsoring! Sometimes tunnel-vision sets in at the Capitol, and our elected officials lose sight of the things they and their friends back home really care about.

The past couple of legislative sessions, we have tried to restore a little clarity and civility to legislative process. One way we have done that is by inviting pastors to the Capitol to talk and pray with our elected leaders and their staff members. In 2015, ministers were able to pray with Governor Hutchinson himself. I've seen pastors share words of encouragement with some very discouraged lawmakers.

It is amazing to see the divine appointments that happen when you bring even a few ministers into the Arkansas Capitol for one morning. Lives are touched. Hearts are softened, and the Capitol becomes a brighter place because of it.

The 2017 Arkansas Legislative Session is here. So is Family Council. We are carrying light and truth into a place that can get very dark. We are also helping ministers and everyday Arkansans do the very same thing. In fact, we're gearing up for our 2017 Pastors Day at the Capitol even as we speak. We are also working on making Arkansas the most pro-life state in America; promoting religious liberty; fighting for home schoolers; and working hard to shape hearts and minds in the process.

And now let me tell you a little more about what Family Council has been doing—and what we plan to do while the legislature is in session over the next ninety days.

## My Thoughts: Is a Satanic Monument Coming to the Capitol?



Friends keep asking if it's true Arkansas will have to place a monument to Satan on the lawn of the state Capitol Building if it follows through with a proposed monument of the Ten Commandments. These questions are being fueled by idle threats from liberals, Little Rock media stories, and a chain email that has circulated way too long.

No satanic monument is coming to the Capitol. The Arkansas Capitol already has several monuments on its lawn. Monuments are approved by the Arkansas Legislature. The legislature would have to approve a satanic monument before one could be placed on the Capitol lawn. That simply isn't going to happen.

These rumors about satanic monuments are just fear-mongering to thwart the Ten Commandments monument lawmakers approved in 2015. Arkansas does not have to put a statue of Satan alongside the Ten Commandments any more than it has to put a statue of a Klansman alongside its monument to the Little Rock Nine. It's a ridiculous claim.

## “Ten Commandments” Monument Moving Forward

Speaking of the Ten Commandment monument, the state is proceeding with its plan to place the monument on the Capitol grounds. The Capitol Grounds Commission recently held a hearing to accept public comments on the monument. Construction of the monument should begin in the coming months.

## Marijuana Commissioners Sworn In

In December Governor Hutchinson, Sen. Dismang, and Rep. Gillam appointed five Arkansans to the Marijuana Commission established by Issue 6: Dr. Ronda Henry-Tillman, M.D., of Little Rock; Dr. Stephen Carroll, PharmD, of Benton; Travis Story, Esqu., of Fayetteville; James Miller of Bryant; and Dr.



Carlos Roman, M.D., of Little Rock. In December the commission held its first meetings to swear-in the commissioners and discuss preliminary business. One of the first things commissioners will have to do is figure out how to go about licensing marijuana growers and sellers in Arkansas.

Frankly, we're concerned marijuana in Arkansas is going to turn out a lot like the Lottery did in 2009, with the State of Arkansas letting an unelected commission get knocked around by a juggernaut of a marijuana industry. Marijuana is big business. There are wealthy corporations who stand to profit from marijuana sales in Arkansas. Our state officials are going to be under tremendous pressure to give these corporations all the freedom they want to set up marijuana farms and stores in our communities. That's why we're working to rein in the marijuana industry in Arkansas—before it becomes entrenched in our state.

## Bill Filed to Ban Some Abortion Procedures

Rep. Andy Mayberry (R-Hensley) has filed H.B. 1032 banning some abortion procedures. The bill is similar to legislation passed in Kansas and Oklahoma. It specifically bans abortion procedures that use tools such as tongs or forceps to dismember an unborn child.

Over the past three years more than 1,200 unborn children have been killed by these procedures. H.B. 1032 has the potential to save the lives of hundreds of unborn children. We look forward to helping Rep. Mayberry and our friends at Arkansas Right to Life pass this pro-life bill.

## Bill Filed Effectively Banning Enforcement of Sharia Law in Arkansas

H.B. 1041 by Rep. Brandt Smith (R-Jonesboro) prohibits recognition of foreign laws in Arkansas. This would effectively prohibit our courts from enforcing Sharia law in our state—something our lawmakers have tried to do in the past. It also likely would prevent our courts from recognizing any type of “international law.” Family Council has never had to take a strong position on this issue in part because so many other Arkansans have done an excellent job opposing international law in our state.

## **State Representative to Withdraw Bill Making Vaccinations Mandatory**

Most children are required to be immunized before entering daycare or elementary school. But what about families with religious objections to vaccines? And what about people who object to vaccines manufactured using cells obtained from aborted babies—such as the mumps and chickenpox vaccines? Should people with objections to vaccines—or certain vaccines—be forced to vaccinate their kids? We don't think so.

In 2003 we helped pass a bill that reached a good compromise. It required schoolchildren to be vaccinated, but it exempted families with religious or philosophical objections to vaccines. In the event of a disease outbreak, the law lets the Department of Health order unimmunized children to stay home from school. It's a good law that has worked well for over a decade.

In December Rep. Karilyn Brown (R-Sherwood) filed H.B. 1043 removing those religious and philosophical exemptions. This well-intended bill would have infringed religious liberty. Fortunately, after speaking with many different people, Rep. Brown announced she would withdraw the bill, meaning it won't be voted on. We are grateful to Rep. Brown for listening to and respecting people's concerns on this issue.

## **Equal Pay Proposal Could Undermine Religious Liberty**

Most people agree men and women with the same skills and qualifications should earn the same pay for the same work. However, an equal pay bill filed at the Arkansas Legislature could inadvertently undermine religious liberty. Currently, Arkansas' discrimination law prevents employers from refusing to hire women or paying male employees higher salaries than female employees for the same work. However, the law contains exemptions for religious organizations; this generally prevents churches from being sued for refusing to ordain female ministers or for assigning men and women different responsibilities within the ministry.

H.B. 1021 by Rep. Fred Love (D – Little Rock) removes those religious exemption from the law, and it changes the word “sex” in the law to “gender.” In this day and age “sex” and “gender” are no longer viewed as the same thing. Transgender activists claim a man's biological sex can be male, but his gender—or gender-identity—can be female. This means H.B. 1021 arguably writes gender-identity into Arkansas' wage discrimination laws.

If this bill passes, in the short run, courts might penalize churches that, for example, do not ordain female ministers or that assign men and women different responsibilities within the ministry. In the long run, they may even penalize churches for firing or refusing to hire transgender individuals. A lot of it depends on how judges interpret these state laws. We hope to work with Rep. Love to amend the bill to address these concerns.

## **Arkansas Supreme Court Issues Good Ruling**

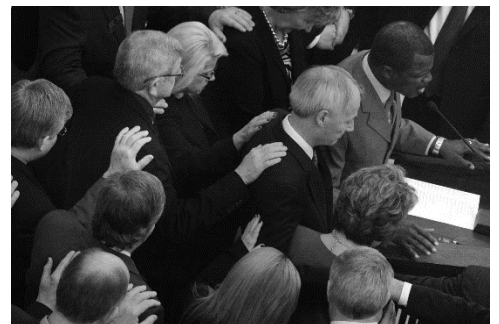
In Arkansas, birth certificates have a space to list one mother and one father. That's because every baby born has, at most, one mother and one father. In 2015 three married, lesbian couples sued the State of Arkansas over its birth certificate laws. Simply put, they wanted to list two “mothers” on children's birth certificates instead of only one mother.

In November of 2015 Pulaski County Circuit Judge Timothy Fox issued a ruling that effectively said the state must let a second “mother” be listed on a birth certificate. Last month the Arkansas Supreme Court overturned Judge Fox's ruling, saying it is entirely appropriate for a child's birth certificate to list his or her mother and father; there is no need to add a second, unrelated “mother” to the certificate.

We are glad the Arkansas Supreme Court chose to uphold state law. Birth certificates are vital records that deserve respect. We should not to let them become ploys in the debates over homosexuality and marriage.

## **Pastors Day at the Capitol Coming February 1**

The 2017 Pastor Day at the Capitol will be on February 1 from 8:30 AM – 1:00 PM. Speakers will include state Rep. Charlene Fite; Lt. Gov. Tim Griffin; and Rev. Philip Pointer, Sr., Senior Pastor of St. Mark Baptist Church in Little Rock. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided. This event is free and open to ministers and their spouses, but you must register in advance to let us know you are coming. Contact Charisse Dean at our office at (501) 375-7000 for more details.



## Here is a Snapshot of Legislation We are Promoting



**Pro-Life.** We have several bills we want to pass. We're working with our friends at Right to Life to promote a bill banning some abortion procedures. We plan to ban abortions performed due to the baby's sex—such as when a mother simply does not want to have a girl. We also want to prohibit experimentation on aborted babies—something brought to light in the recent, undercover Planned Parenthood videos.

**Religious Freedom.** Attorneys at Alliance Defending Freedom are helping us draft legislation that will protect religious individuals from being bullied by the government. In particular, we want to protect people

with religious objections to same-sex marriage from being punished for their beliefs.

**Marijuana.** We have a long list of marijuana legislation. Our first priority is to ban smoking and vaping of “medical” marijuana as other states have done. We also want to give cities and counties the ability to regulate or prohibit marijuana. Otherwise counties where alcohol is illegal will have to let people buy and use marijuana.

**Gambling.** The Arkansas Lottery should have to budget at least 25% of its gross revenue for scholarships. We also want to prohibit Internet gambling, such as online lottery ticket sales and wagering on horse races online.

**Home Schooling.** We plan to move forward with legislation clarifying the state's “Tim Tebow” law letting home schoolers participate in interscholastic activities at their local public school. We also plan to abolish the annual waiver form home schoolers must file with the state and simplify the Notice of Intent to Home School.

**Local Ordinances.** A few cities and counties have passed ordinances granting special rights and privileges based on sexual orientation and gender identity, despite state law to the contrary. City attorneys are citing ambiguities in state law that they believe let them do this. We plan to close these loopholes.

**Public Showers, Restrooms, and Similar Facilities.** Even though President Obama is leaving office this month—and we expect most of his radical policies to leave with him—Arkansas still needs to address the issue of men trying to gain access to women's restrooms, locker rooms, showers, and similar facilities. We are working on the Arkansas Privacy Act, which will regulate public facilities in government buildings like schools, courthouse, public parks and swimming pools, and so on. The goal is to protect people's privacy and keep women and children out of harm's way in these locations.

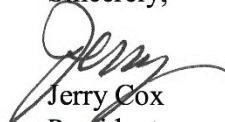
## We Need Your Help

We're gearing up for an ambitious legislative session. In addition to protecting human life, we also want to protect religious liberty and push back against the radical, transgender agenda that is attempting to use our schoolchildren as ploys. Your donations enable us to do this good work.

Right now about half the people on our mailing list either have never given to Family Council or have not supported our work in the past three years. If you have not given to Family Council in a while—or if you have never given—now is a great time to support us. You will help us save the lives of unborn children and protect the rights you and your family enjoy.

Please use the enclosed envelope and response card to send your donation today. And let me know if there is ever anything my staff or I can do for you.

Sincerely,



Jerry Cox  
President

P.S. As we enter the 2017 legislative session, we are gearing up to do some of our most important work all year. We're going to stand up for human life, protect the privacy of women and children, and promote religious liberty. Your generous support helps us do that. Thank you for standing with us.