



**FAMILY  
COUNCIL**

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to pray for our nation. I hope  
we will do that this Thanksgiving. ”**

**NOVEMBER 2017  
UPDATE LETTER**

**DEAR FRIENDS,**

The autumn of 1777 was a turbulent time in American history. The colonies had declared their independence a year before, and the Revolutionary War was in full swing. The United States had suffered a series of setbacks, and the British occupied Philadelphia. In October of 1777 American troops won a major victory at the Battle of Saratoga. In response, the Continental Congress issued a proclamation whose legacy lives on to this day: “A Proclamation for A General Thanksgiving Throughout the United States of America.”

The proclamation reads in part:

*Forasmuch as it is the indispensable duty of all men to adore the superintending providence of Almighty God... It is therefore recommended... to set apart Thursday, the 18th day of December next, for solemn thanksgiving and praise; that with one heart and one voice the good people may express the grateful feelings of their hearts, and consecrate themselves to the service of their divine benefactor; and that together with their sincere acknowledgments and offerings, they may join the penitent confession of their manifold sins, whereby they had forfeited every favor, and their humble and earnest supplication that it may please God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of remembrance... And it is further recommended, that servile labor, and such recreation as, though at other times innocent, may be unbecoming the purpose of this appointment, be omitted on so solemn an occasion.*

This was not the first time Congress called on Americans to pray. Similar proclamations were issued in 1775 and 1776. The 1777 proclamation is important for three reasons: Its content, context, and legacy.

The 1777 proclamation was one of the first specifically to call on Americans to give thanks. It even goes so far as to mention Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost by name. The proclamation leaves no doubt about what Congress expected Americans to do during the day of thanksgiving. The proclamation's context also is very important. The American people faced incredible challenges. Our military forces had suffered a series of losses and setbacks in Pennsylvania. America finally had won a major victory. Against this backdrop, Congress decided to turn to prayer and thanksgiving to God.

This proclamation set the stage for future calls for prayer and thanksgiving. It helped make days of thanksgiving a tradition in America. It paved the way for the federal holiday we will celebrate later this month—a day for us to pause and express gratitude for the blessings we enjoy.

There's no doubt our country faces trying times right now. In the past year we have been rocked by mass shootings, hurricanes, wildfires, and threats of nuclear war. Many people have criticized our elected officials for lending their “thoughts and prayers” to the victims of these tragedies instead of passing laws or “taking action.” Almost two years ago New York's *Daily News* ran a front page editorial headline about mass shootings. It read, “God Isn't Fixing This.”

I disagree. I think the Continental Congress got it right 240 years ago when it called on Americans to pray and give thanks in the face of trouble. More than ever, we need to pray for our nation. I hope we will do that this Thanksgiving. And now let me tell you a little more about what Family Council has been doing—and what we have planned for the coming months.

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Family Council  
President Jerry Cox

## MY THOUGHTS: TRACING THE HISTORY OF THANKSGIVING

Although the Pilgrims held the very first American Thanksgiving, President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 proclamation setting aside the last Thursday of November as a day of prayer and thanksgiving is generally considered the starting point for our modern Thanksgiving Holiday. However, our staff has found roughly a dozen other proclamations calling on people to pray and give thanks during the early days of our nation.

For example, in June of 1775—more than a year before the signing of the Declaration of Independence—the Continental Congress issued a resolution calling on colonists to fast and pray. In December of 1776 Congress called on the states to fix a day of “fasting and humiliation” and repentance. In November of 1777, Congress proclaimed a day “for solemn thanksgiving and praise” to God. Congress issued another prayer proclamation in 1778; two in 1779; one in 1780; and one more in 1781. You can find many of these proclamations by searching our website at [www.FamilyCouncil.org](http://www.FamilyCouncil.org).

What's fascinating about these proclamations is that many of them call for fasting, humiliation, prayer, praise, and worship besides giving thanks. Several even encourage churches to hold services. Can you imagine people fasting on Thanksgiving instead of eating turkey—or going to church instead of watching football?

Food and fellowship are some of the best parts of our modern Thanksgiving tradition. I don't believe we should change that. But I want to make sure we don't lose sight of what Thanksgiving was intended to be from the start: A time where we thank God for His many blessings and pray earnestly for our nation. “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalm 127:1b KJV).

## Family Council Opposes SJR 8 (Tort Reform Proposal)

SJR 8 changes Arkansas' laws about personal-injury lawsuits. This proposed constitutional amendment was referred to voters by the Arkansas Legislature last spring. It will appear on the ballot next November. If passed, it will become part of the Arkansas Constitution.

SJR 8 claims to reduce the number of frivolous lawsuits, lower attorney's fees, and improve our economy. All of this could have been accomplished without SJR 8, but the legislature bowed to heavy lobbying from nursing homes and business interests. They put this fatally flawed measure on the 2018 General Election ballot for a statewide vote.

Under current law, a jury hearing a personal-injury lawsuit reviews evidence, examines the facts, and awards damages to the injured party based on what they determine is appropriate. Some people believe juries award victims too much money, so SJR 8 restricts how much juries can award. SJR 8 limits attorney's fees in personal-injury lawsuits and lets the Arkansas Legislature cap noneconomic damages at half a million dollars for an injury or death. Under current law, there are no limits; juries award damages on a case-by-case basis. SJR 8 also lets lawmakers make rules about evidence that can be used in personal-injury lawsuits. The chamber of commerce, nursing homes, trucking companies, and other business interests support this change in the law, because they say it will save them money on lawsuits. In addition, nursing homes especially like the part that lets the legislature limit the evidence juries can consider in cases of patient abuse or neglect.

Family Council has never opposed responsible lawsuit reforms. As far back as 2003, we did not oppose general

malpractice reform measures passed by the legislature. That same year, however, we did oppose a proposal that could have given an unfair advantage to nursing homes over good care for residents. We are involved in this issue primarily because of its impact on elderly residents of nursing homes and other vulnerable people.

The legislature could have passed a measure to protect good doctors from malpractice lawsuits, limit attorney's fees, and reduce frivolous lawsuits. Instead, they stood with the nursing home lobbyists and passed a measure that favors nursing home owners. Some nursing home owners simply don't want to spend the money necessary to provide quality care. They cut staff, reduce services, compromise care, and let people suffer. Most families have a story about a loved one who was neglected or mistreated in a nursing home. The fear of a lawsuit may be all that keeps some nursing homes in line. SJR 8 removes that threat. Once that goes away, our elderly nursing home residents will suffer even more.

SJR 8 will benefit big businesses, nursing homes, and doctors who fear lawsuits, but at whose expense? It is a bad law for common citizens who are injured and seeking justice through our court system. We trust juries—not the politicians—to decide who should get the death penalty in criminal cases. Why shouldn't we trust juries to decide how much money someone gets in a personal-injury lawsuit? Instead, SJR 8 lets politicians put a dollar value on human life.

**Take Action:** Copy and share this with the members of your church. Write a letter to your newspaper editor opposing SJR 8.

## Planned Parenthood Asking U.S. Supreme Court to Toss Out Pro-Life Ruling

In 2015 the Arkansas Legislature passed the Abortion-Inducing Drugs Safety Act sponsored by Rep. Charlene Fite (R – Van Buren). The law requires clinics performing chemical abortions to contract with a doctor who has admitting privileges at a hospital. Planned Parenthood sued, and a federal judge blocked the law last year.

In July a three-judge panel from the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed that judge's order. In early October Planned Parenthood filed court papers indicating it would appeal its case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Planned Parenthood claims it will have to stop doing abortions if the Abortion-Inducing Drugs Safety Act goes into effect. All I can say is, "Good!"

**This simple law may have a larger impact on abortion than any other bill we have worked on in recent history.**

When the Abortion-Inducing Drugs Safety Act was filed in 2015, a lot of people said it wouldn't do anything. Before it's over, this simple law may have a larger impact on abortion and pro-life laws in America than any other bill we have worked on in recent history. Here's how:

- 1. The "Large Fraction" Test.** The Eighth Circuit panel essentially said judges can't just strike down any law that makes it harder to get an abortion. The law must affect a large percentage of women seeking an abortion. That applies to every state in the Eighth Circuit. This could make it easier for pro-life laws in Arkansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota to withstand challenges.
- 2. Admitting Privileges.** Last year the U.S. Supreme Court struck a Texas law requiring abortion doctors to have admitting privileges at a local hospital. Many took that to mean admitting privileges requirements were unconstitutional. The Abortion-Inducing Drugs Safety Act requires abortion clinics to contract with a physician who has hospital admitting privileges. However, the Eighth Circuit implied Arkansas' law is different from Texas' and might be constitutional. That would be a major victory.
- 3. Future Pro-Life Laws.** The Eighth Circuit's ruling revealed other pro-life laws we might pursue. For example, the judges suggested a state could require abortion clinics to maintain a twenty-four hour emergency telephone line. This ruling will help guide our pro-life legislation in the future.

## Here's Where the Pro-Life Laws and Lawsuits Stand

If you're having trouble keeping track of all the different pro-life lawsuits in play right now, you aren't alone. Here's a breakdown of where things stand:

- 1. Abortion-Inducing Drugs Safety Act:** This good law requires abortion drugs to be dispensed according to FDA protocols and requires abortion clinics to contract with a doctor who has hospital admitting privileges. It's been upheld at the federal Eighth Circuit, but Planned Parenthood is appealing to the Supreme Court.
- 2. Medicaid Funding:** In 2015 Arkansas cut Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood. A panel of judges ruled the state can do that, but Planned Parenthood has appealed to the entire Eighth Circuit.
- 3. Dismemberment Abortion:** In 2017 the legislature prohibited dismemberment abortions. U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker blocked the law. Attorney General Rutledge has asked the Eighth Circuit to overturn that decision.
- 4. Sex-Selection Abortion:** In 2017 the legislature passed a law prohibiting abortions performed due to the baby's sex. U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker blocked the law. Attorney General Rutledge has asked the Eighth Circuit to overturn that decision.
- 5. Reporting Requirements:** In 2017 the Arkansas Legislature amended some of the reporting requirements for abortions performed on teen girls. U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker blocked the law. Attorney General Rutledge has asked the Eighth Circuit to overturn that decision.
- 6. Prohibiting Buying and Selling of Aborted Babies:** In 2017 the legislature passed a law generally preventing people from using aborted babies for scientific research and requiring aborted babies to be respectfully cremated or buried. U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker blocked the law. Attorney General Rutledge has asked the Eighth Circuit to overturn that decision.
- 7. Clinic Inspections:** In 2017 the legislature passed a law ensuring any clinic that fails a health inspection will stop doing abortions immediately. A lawsuit is pending regarding the law, but no ruling has been issued.

**Take Action:** Call (501) 682-2007 to thank Attorney General Rutledge for defending Arkansas' pro-life laws.



## Arkansas Congressmen All Co-Sponsor Federal Pro-Life Bill

In October the U.S. House passed the federal Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. This federal bill is similar to a state law Arkansas passed in 2013. It prohibits abortion after the twentieth week of pregnancy, except in cases of rape or incest or to save the life of the mother. All four of Arkansas' congressmen co-sponsored and voted for this good bill. The proposal now goes to the U.S. Senate.

**Take Action:** Thank your congressman for supporting H.R. 36, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. Call us at (501) 375-7000 if you need your congressman's contact information.

## We are Reviewing Abortion Rules and Regs

The Arkansas Department of Health is in the process of writing rules and regulations based on all the pro-life laws passed last spring. Our staff is reviewing those rules and regs and communicating with the Health Department. Our goal is to make sure every pro-life law we've passed is properly enforced.

## Want to Prohibit Marijuana Farms and Stores in Your Community?

The state has received more than 300 applications to grow or sell "medical" marijuana in Arkansas. In October we posted a breakdown of the number of applications from each county on our website at [www.FamilyCouncil.org](http://www.FamilyCouncil.org). Family Council Action Committee is helping citizens circulate petitions to prohibit marijuana farms and stores in their communities. **If that's something you want to do, call (501) 375-7000.**

## HELP PROMOTE, PROTECT, AND STRENGTHEN TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES

You are an essential part of our work. When we take a stand at the Arkansas Capitol, lawmakers know we have thousands of families like yours backing us. When we send out a call to action, I trust friends like you to respond. It means so much to have you with us.

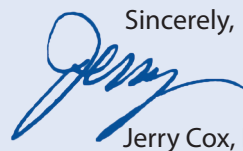
There are fewer than 8 weeks left in 2017. Here's a snapshot of what we have planned for the coming months:

1. We are looking at ways to support Arkansas' pregnancy resource centers. These centers help women choose alternatives to abortion. If we want to end abortion in Arkansas, we need to give women viable options besides abortion.
2. We are continuing to oppose the expansion of marijuana in Arkansas.
3. We are gearing up to survey candidates in 2018 for our Arkansas Voter's Guide.
4. Next November Arkansans will vote on ballot measures. We plan to tell people everything they need to know about these proposals over the next twelve months.

Here are three ways you can help us:

1. **Pray:** Now more than ever we need your prayers if we are going to stand strong for traditional family values.
2. **Spread the Word:** We are always on the lookout for new friends and supporters. I hope you will help us by telling your family members and neighbors about the work we are doing.
3. **Give:** If you are able, I hope you will send a generous, tax-deductible donation to Family Council. No gift is too small. We always work very hard to stretch each dollar as far as it will go. You can use the enclosed response card and return envelope to mail your donation back to us today. You also can give securely online at [www.FamilyCouncil.org](http://www.FamilyCouncil.org).

Thank you for your generous support, your kind words, and your prayers. It is always good to hear from you. Please give me a call if there is ever anything my staff or I can do for you.

Sincerely,  
  
Jerry Cox, President

Thank you!!

P.S. Planned Parenthood is taking a lawsuit against one of our pro-life laws all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Congress recently passed a good, pro-life bill. Family Council opposes a constitutional amendment that lets politicians put a price tag on human life. We're gearing up for the 2018 Arkansas Voter's Guide. Your support is helping us do a lot of good work in Arkansas. **Thank you for standing with us.**