



FAMILY
COUNCIL

inside:

—
**Arkansas
Legislature's
Budget Session
Is In The Books**

—
**Lawmakers
Approve \$1M for
Pregnancy Centers,
Maternity Homes,
Adoption Agencies**

—
**SAFE Act Goes to
Court This October**

—
**Across the Board,
Communities in
Arkansas Support
Pro-Life Resolutions**

—
& MORE

APRIL 2022
UPDATE LETTER

Dear Friends,

The filmmaker George Lucas said, "You simply have to put one foot in front of the other and keep going. Put blinders on and plow right ahead."

Blackie was a good horse—and maybe a little bit like George Lucas. It was an exciting spring day for me as a five-year-old when my daddy would hitch Blackie up to a plow so he could break up our acre-sized garden for spring planting. Gee, haw, and a few other commands were all that Blackie needed to make a straight furrow under the guidance of my dad's strong hands.

I knew about the reins, bit, and collar, but then there were those funny looking leather blinders attached to the bridle shielding Blackie's eyes. I remember later back at home asking my mother what they were for. She explained that they were there to help keep Blackie going straight forward—otherwise we might end up with some pretty crooked rows of vegetables.

Later I learned that horses practically have eyes in the back of their head. They can see everything in all directions except a narrow swath directly behind them, and motion scares them. When blinders reduce their field of vision, they can focus and pay more attention to the task at hand. Race horses wear blinders to keep them from looking at other horses or at the crowd, because it slows them down and they can lose the race. Horses that pull carriages or plows or perform other work wear blinders to help them avoid swaying from right to left. Finally, blinders help horses relax under the command of their drivers rather than being spooked, stressed, or distracted by everything going on around them.

As a boy I never thought about Blackie's fears, distractions, or stress. But as an adult leading an organization for 33 years, I could tell you a lot about my own difficulties and how I can use some blinders to keep me on track. Here is what I've learned.

Since it is God who calls us to our tasks, we need to be blind to everything that is not from God. *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Philippians 3:13-14 KJV

As we run the race that He has set before us, we should not waste time comparing ourselves to those around us or dwelling on what others say about us. *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* Galatians 1:10 KJV

Without looking back or swerving to the right or left, we must resolve to go on and finish the work that God has called us to do. *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.* Luke 9:62 KJV

Blinders calm our fears as we hear and apply God's word to direct our lives. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Matthew 11:28-30 KJV

At Family Council we face many distractions—loud voices that criticize us—haughty eyes that look down on us—people who gossip—it can all add up to a heavy load. But it all grows strangely dim when we turn our eyes on Jesus—when we put on God's blinders and focus on him and what he has called us to do.



Family Council
President Jerry Cox

MY THOUGHTS: ARKANSAS LEGISLATURE'S BUDGET SESSION IS IN THE BOOKS

In February and March the Arkansas Legislature convened for its fiscal session. During odd-numbered years, lawmakers pass new laws and approve the state's annual budget. During even-numbered years, like 2022, they just meet to approve the budget. During even-numbered years, the Arkansas Constitution lets lawmakers take up regular legislation if 2/3 of the Arkansas House and Arkansas Senate first approve a resolution authorizing introduction of a non-budget measure. That means introducing a new law during a budget session first requires 67 out of 100 votes in the Arkansas House of Representatives and 24 out of 35 votes in the Arkansas Senate—which is difficult to do.

Some lawmakers unsuccessfully tried get a two-thirds vote in both chambers to introduce legislation similar to the abortion law that Texas passed last year. Even though our lawmakers are the most pro-life in the nation they made the difficult choice of delaying passage of any more abortion bills until this summer when the U.S. Supreme Court rules in the *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health* case. In

spite of success in Texas, lawyers who have argued abortion cases in U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker's court in Little Rock have expressed their certainty that she would treat an Arkansas version of Texas-type abortion law the same as every other abortion law that has crossed her desk—by stopping it immediately. If this is true, such a law would stop no abortions in Arkansas.

In addition, judges in the Eighth Circuit, the higher federal court above Judge Baker, have said they are waiting for the U.S. Supreme Court to rule in the *Dobbs* case between now and June before they decide how to interpret new abortion laws. According to four pro-life attorneys with the Arkansas Attorney General's Office, passing new abortion restrictions at this time would complicate their ability to successfully argue in federal court for the enforcement of Arkansas' total ban on abortions if the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade* this summer. Unlike Texas and most other states, Arkansas has already passed a law making abortion illegal except to save the mother's life.

After the Supreme Court rules in the *Dobbs* case this summer, if our laws are not strong enough to stop all abortions, we will be back at the State Capitol working to pass as many pro-life laws as it takes to end abortion in Arkansas. Once the Court rules, we will know what needs to be done.

Good news! Lawmakers approved the State of Arkansas' budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. As part of that budget, the legislature included \$1 million in grant funding that will go directly to crisis pregnancy centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, and social services agencies in Arkansas that provide material support to women with unplanned pregnancies. Family Council was pleased to support this good effort. Keep reading to learn a little more about how this funding is part of a long term strategy to eliminate the demand for abortion in Arkansas.

Lawmakers Approve \$1M for Pregnancy Centers, Maternity Homes, Adoption Agencies

In March, Arkansas' lawmakers approved \$1 million in state funding for grants that can go directly to crisis pregnancy centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, and social services agencies that provide material support to women with unplanned pregnancies. Act 187 of 2022 by Sen. Jimmy Hickey (R – Texarkana) provides the funding beginning on July 1 of this year. The Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration will be responsible for overseeing the program and awarding grant money to pregnancy centers that apply for funding.

This is a tremendous investment that could save countless lives from abortion. Pregnancy resource centers provide everything from ultrasounds and pregnancy tests to maternity clothes and adoption referrals—typically free of charge. They often operate on very tight budgets and rely heavily on volunteers and donations. Some centers in Arkansas can afford to operate for only a few hours a week. The same is true in other parts of the country. That's why a growing number of states provide these organizations with state funding.

As part of our long-term plan to reduce the demand for Abortion in Arkansas, in January some pro-life leaders and I met with Governor Hutchinson and officials from the Arkansas House and Arkansas Senate. Our recommendation was for Arkansas to follow a dozen other states by launching a State-funded program for pregnancy centers. The Governor agreed. House and Senate leadership drew up the plan and presented it as a part of this year's state budget in Act 187.

Family Council was pleased to support Act 187 during the legislature's fiscal session. In the coming months, this legislation will help equip pregnancy centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, and other agencies with the resources they need to serve women and families in communities across Arkansas.

Sometimes we forget the larger picture. I am reminded that we are not just funding pregnancy centers. These dollars will save the lives of unborn children. None of us knows how many, but we're safe to say that \$1 million spent by pregnancy centers will help lots of women decide not to get an abortion.

We're Preparing to Provide Other Aid to Pro-Life Organizations in Arkansas

Since 2018, one of our long term plans has been to provide aid to pro-life organizations and charities that help women and families with unplanned pregnancies. The typical woman walking into an abortion facility in Little Rock is a single mom in her 20s. If we truly want to end abortion, one of the most effective ways to do so is to give these women pro-life alternatives to abortion. A few years ago we helped start the ARFuture Foundation. The foundation identifies pro-life organizations that provide these alternatives to abortion, and it works to find ways to support their work.

Last year the ARFuture Foundation received approval for federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding. Congress created the TANF program in the 1990s when it reformed the welfare programs. Under this program, pregnancy centers and similar organizations can receive reimbursements from the federal government for eligible expenses. That means if a pregnancy center spends money on something like diapers or baby formula, the ARFuture Foundation may be able to work with that center to provide government funds reimbursing the center for the money it spent on those items.

Last year the ARFuture Foundation also applied for federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Among other things, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provides grant

funding that can go to businesses and organizations at the state and local level. If the application receives approval later this year, the ARFuture Foundation should be able to help pro-life organizations in Arkansas use this funding to serve their communities.

The goal is to equip pregnancy centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, and similar organizations with as much funding as possible. If we do that, they can provide as many services to women and families as possible—all with as little waste as possible. That will help eliminate the demand for abortion.



The Satanic Temple Renews Legal Effort to Place Pro-Abortion Billboards in Arkansas

On February 25, the Satanic Temple filed a federal lawsuit against Lamar Advertising in Arkansas' Western District Court over a set of pro-abortion billboards that Lamar rejected in 2020. The lawsuit appears to be part of the Satanic Temple's ongoing pro-abortion work in Arkansas and other states. Here's the background:

In September of 2020 Lamar Advertising rejected four designs for billboards that claimed the Satanic Temple's "religious abortion ritual averts many state restrictions" on abortion. According to court documents the Satanic Temple wanted to place the billboards near pregnancy resource centers in Little Rock, Jacksonville, Fayetteville, and Springdale. One of the proposed billboards even claimed pregnancy complications are the sixth most common cause of death among women between the ages of 20 and 34, and concluded that "abortions save lives."

Understandably, Lamar rejected the billboard designs for being misleading and offensive. The Satanic Temple responded by filing a lawsuit against Lamar in state court in September of 2020. After a few months, the attorney for the Satanic Temple dropped that lawsuit in February of 2021. That was the last we heard until the Satanic Temple filed a new lawsuit against Lamar in February—this time in federal court.

The federal lawsuit that the Satanic Temple filed on February 25 rehashes many of the same points the organization made in its state lawsuit back in 2020. Among other things, the lawsuit argues that "[the Satanic Temple] holds the view that some abortion restrictions substantially interfere with its religious beliefs. Particularly, abortion restrictions ... interfere with [the group's tenets regarding] bodily autonomy and ... [are] not grounded in science." The federal lawsuit is in U.S. District Judge Timothy L. Brooks' court. President Obama appointed Judge Brooks to the court in 2013.

It's worth pointing out that the Satanic Temple is an atheist organization. The group has tried for years to persuade federal courts to recognize abortion as a religious ritual. So far courts have not done that. It's very telling that the Satanic Temple would want to put overtly pro-abortion billboards near pregnancy resource centers in Arkansas. Pregnancy resource centers give women real options besides abortion. They play a vital role in the effort to end abortion in Arkansas. The fact that any group would want to place pro-abortion billboards near pregnancy resource centers speaks volumes about how effective these pro-life organizations are.

Across the Board, Communities in Arkansas Support Pro-Life Resolutions

Opinions on abortion tend to run along political party lines, with Republicans generally opposing abortion and Democrats generally supporting it. However, in the past twelve months we have seen a surprising number of pro-life resolutions pass at the city and county level with bipartisan support.

Last year the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 392 of 2021 by Rep. Kendon Underwood (R – Cave Springs) and Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R – Branch). This is a good law that recognizes the right of cities and counties to pass resolutions affirming they are Pro-Life. Since the passage of Act 392, more than two dozen communities across Arkansas have passed pro-life resolutions, including:

- Washington County
- Benton County
- Crawford County
- Cleburne County
- Pope County
- Jackson County
- Saline County
- Faulkner County
- Perry County
- Sebastian County
- Lee County
- White County
- Prairie County
- Searcy County
- Carrol County
- Newton County
- Boone County
- Hot Spring County
- Marianna
- Russellville
- Springdale
- LaGrange
- Moro
- Aubrey
- Haynes
- Marshall
- Western Grove
- Leslie

In Lee County, the quorum court has passed a pro-life resolution and so has almost every city council in the county. In many communities—like Boone County and Western Grove—pro-life resolutions have passed with little or no opposition.

SAFE Act Goes to Court This October

The U.S. District Court in Little Rock has scheduled the lawsuit over Arkansas' Save Adolescents From Experimentation (SAFE) Act to go to trial sometime during the week of October 17, 2022. The Arkansas Legislature overwhelmingly passed the SAFE Act in April of last year. It is an excellent law that protects children from sex-reassignment procedures, puberty blockers, and cross-sex hormones.

Researchers do not know the long term effects that puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones can have on kids. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has never approved puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for the purpose of gender transition. Doctors are giving these hormones to kids off-label, in a manner the FDA never intended. That is part of the reason many experts agree that giving puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to children is experimen-

tal, at best. That is also why a major hospital in Sweden announced last year that it would no longer administer puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to children.

Unfortunately, the ACLU and others filed a lawsuit against the SAFE Act last summer, before the law officially took effect. Several business interests and the Biden Administration also have joined the fight against Arkansas' SAFE Act. In July, U.S. District Judge James Moody temporarily blocked the state from enforcing the law while the lawsuit progresses. We should see a number of legal briefings filed in the case between now and October. Family Council was pleased to support the SAFE Act last year. We believe federal courts ultimately will recognize that the SAFE Act is a good law that protects children and uphold it as constitutional.



March 8, 2022: A standing-room-only crowd watches as the Boone County Quorum Court unanimously approves a resolution affirming the county is a Pro-Life County.

Amendment Vying for November Ballot Would Remove Legislative Oversight From Public Education Rules

A proposed constitutional amendment would make it more difficult for the Arkansas Legislature and the governor to oversee public education or hold educators accountable. Arkansans For World Class Education is working to place the “Public Schools Amendment of 2022” on the ballot this November.

Right now, the Arkansas Legislature has the ability to review and reject rules and policies that the State Board of Education makes. The Public Schools Amendment of 2022 would write new language in the Arkansas Constitution that replaces the current State Board of Education with a

different governing board and says the governor and the Arkansas Legislature would not have the power to review or approve new rules or policies the board makes concerning public education in Arkansas. This would take legislative oversight and accountability away from the Department of Education. The amendment’s supporters are circulating petitions to place the measure on the ballot this November. As parents and lawmakers grow more and more concerned about critical theory and other divisive ideas in our schools, this doesn’t seem like the time to take oversight and accountability away from public education.

In Facebook Post, Jonesboro Public Library Defends Giving Obscene Material to Minors

On February 28 the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library posted a statement on Facebook in defense of sharing pornographic and obscene material with children. The post was later removed, but Family Council was able to take a screenshot of it before it disappeared.

Last year the public library in Jonesboro made headlines after a lawsuit revealed that extremely graphic material was on the shelves in the children’s section of the Jonesboro library. Some of the material was so explicit that it could not be shown on television, and Family Council did not feel comfortable sharing it on the Internet; some of the material describes or even shows teenagers engaging in sexual activity. So far, the library’s board has failed to move this explicit material out of the children’s section of the library.

Part of the problem has to do with state law. Like many states, Arkansas law recognizes a difference between pornographic material and obscene material. State law restricts pornography, but pornographic material isn’t a crime. However, state law defines particularly offensive, sexually explicit material as “obscene.” Under laws that Arkansas passed in the 1960s and 1980s, it is a crime to possess or distribute obscene material. Some of the books in the children’s section at the library in Jonesboro probably meets the definition of “obscene material” in Arkansas law. The problem is that state law also exempts public libraries, schools,

and museums from Arkansas’ obscenity law. If a librarian wants to put obscene material where kids can see it, state law allows it—even though it would be a crime for anyone else to give obscene material to a minor.

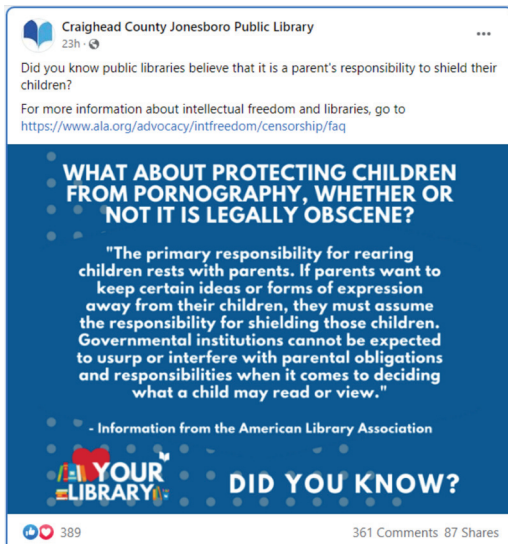
In a February 28 Facebook post, the public library in Jonesboro wrote, “Did you know public libraries believe that it is a parent’s responsibility to shield their children?” The library then went on to quote the American Library Association, saying:

What About Protecting Children From Pornography, Whether Or Not It Is Legally Obscene?

The primary responsibility for rearing children rests with parents. If parents want to keep certain ideas or forms of expression away from their children, they must assume the responsibility for shielding those children. Governmental institutions cannot be expected to usurp or interfere with parental obligations and responsibilities when it comes to deciding what a child may read or view.

To put it another way, this statement is saying that if a nine-year-old boy finds pornographic or obscene books in the children’s section of the library, it’s the parents’ fault—not the library’s. Frankly, that’s ridiculous.

The good news is your community still can take steps to remove obscene or objectionable material from your local library. Library boards and librarians have leeway to establish selection criteria and make decisions about the kinds of material available on the library’s shelves. That is something that many people have asked the library board in Jonesboro to do. Most libraries have a Material Reconsideration Form you can use to ask them to remove obscene or inappropriate material. And voters can call on their elected officials to enact laws protecting children from obscene and pornographic material in public libraries.



Left: A screenshot of the Jonesboro Public Library’s Facebook post. The post has since been removed.

Arkansas Lawmakers Approve Sports Betting on Smart Phones

In late February the Arkansas Legislature's Joint Budget Committee approved a state rule change that allows sports betting online via mobile devices. The new rule took effect in early March. Under this new rule, gamblers will be able to bet on sporting events online via a computer, smart phone, or other mobile device from anywhere in Arkansas. Some 100 individuals and organizations submitted public comments opposing the rule change, and Family Council made it clear to lawmakers that we oppose mobile sports betting. However, the State of Arkansas decided to move forward with mobile sports betting despite this opposition.

Order Free Voter's Guides At ArkansasVotersGuide.com

We are preparing to send printed copies of the 2022 Arkansas Voter's Guide in just a few weeks. You will get a free copy in the mail when we do that. If you would like to pre-order free additional copies of the guide for your family or church, go to ArkansasVotersGuide.com and use the website's order form. Our guide shows where candidates stand on abortion, critical race theory, vaccine mandates, and other important issues.



HELP US KEEP MEETING GOALS IN 2022

In December, Family Council outlined 20 goals for 2022. Secure funding for pregnancy resource centers? Check. Host monthly prayer meetings online? Check. Establish pro-life cities and counties all over Arkansas? Check. Continue building on the 2021 "No Patient Left Alone Act"? We're doing that. Distribute thousands of copies of our 2022 Arkansas Voter's Guide? We plan to do exactly that in the next four weeks. Support religious liberty in our state? We've developed a strategy for doing that in the coming months—and I can't wait to tell you more about that plan very soon.

My team and I always work hard to accomplish the goals that we set. It's part of being good stewards. We want to stretch every dollar we receive as far as it will go—to do the most good that we possibly can. That's why I hope you will send a generous, tax-deductible donation today, if you are able. Your gift will help us keep meeting goals for 2022—like opposing marijuana and gambling, blunting critical theory and the LGBT agenda, and equipping Arkansans to take a stand in the public arena.

Thank you for your friendship and support. **Please call us if there is ever anything my staff or I can do for you.**

Sincerely,

Jerry Cox, President

Thank you!!

P.S. The Arkansas Legislature has authorized \$1 million in grant funding for pregnancy resource centers beginning in July. That's a huge win for Arkansas! We are looking forward to sending you a free printed copy of the Arkansas Voter's Guide in just a few weeks. Your support is doing so much good in Arkansas. Thank you for standing with us.



About Us: Family Council is a conservative, Christian non-profit organization based in Little Rock, Arkansas. Jerry Cox founded Family Council in 1989 in association with Dr. James Dobson and Focus on the Family. Our mission is to promote, protect, and strengthen traditional family values. We educate and equip families and churches to make Arkansas a better place to live, work, and raise a family, and we lobby lawmakers and elected officials on important issues that matter to families. Our work is funded by generous supporters all over Arkansas.
