



FAMILY  
COUNCIL

*inside:*

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FEBRUARY 2023  
UPDATE LETTER

## *Dear Friends,*

The day after Christmas in 1994, my nine year old son David and I went hiking along a remote creek in the Ouachita National Forest near Wolf Mountain about an hour west of Little Rock. I was 43 at the time, and the weather was excellent. We paused above a small waterfall about three-quarters of a mile down the trail. I decided to climb onto a large boulder for a better view. As soon as I did, the boulder gave way underneath me. My son watched as this enormous rock and I tumbled down the embankment, and I landed face-down in the shallow creek bed.

The boulder came to rest just a few feet from me. Miraculously, I didn't suffer any life-threatening injuries. But I knew I was hurt when my left knee gave way as I tried to stand. I crawled up a ten-foot embankment to the trail above and managed to find a straight tree limb to use as a crutch. Thankfully, I was able to hobble back to my truck and drive home. The next morning I still couldn't walk, so I made an appointment at a sports medicine clinic down the street from my house. A couple of X-rays quickly revealed a fracture in my left knee.

*“You'll need outpatient surgery,” the doctor told me. “I'll insert a pair of screws into you knee. You'll need kneecap replacement surgery when you're sixty-five.” That's fine, I thought. I won't turn sixty-five until 2016!*

A few days later my family and I met the doctor at Baptist Hospital in Little Rock for surgery. The procedure went well, and over the course of the next two months I became very skilled at maneuvering on crutches while my knee healed. During that time, the annual March for Life took place in Little Rock. I opted to stand with my crutches on the capitol lawn and photograph the marchers instead of walking with everyone that year. The Arkansas Legislature convened, and I had to navigate up and down the marble steps and hallways of the capitol on crutches. All I can say is that wet marble floors and crutches don't mix! I did buy a brand new device called a cellular telephone that wouldn't fit in a pocket and was good for little more than calling for a ride from the Capitol. Over 2,000 bills that session were strictly on paper. Committee agendas were on paper posted on a giant board at the capitol. There were no laptops, no text messages, and no looking anything up online. It was all shoe-leather and face-to-face conversations. I quickly learned you can't carry anything in your hand while walking on crutches, so I improvised using a couple of machine screws and wingnuts to attach a file carrier to one crutch. As they say, necessity is the mother of invention.

Sometime later I learned the doctor who examined and operated on my knee quietly performed surgeries on professional athletes as part of his practice. Pro athletes sometimes worry about injury reports and gossip hurting their careers. My doctor was very nondescript, and the clinic did not look like the kind of place NFL players would go, but another doctor assured me they were there, having surgeries. Over 20 years later an orthopedic surgeon x-rayed my leg. He stopped and called in an intern to see what precise surgery had been done on my knee.

Nearly 30 years after that injury I am still walking the halls of the Capitol, going up and down the stairs and standing in committee rooms, waiting testify. I have no pain and no difficulty getting around. Some might call it luck, but folks like you and me know God's hand guides us even when we have a bum knee and go to an orthopedic clinic to see a doctor we know nothing about. By the way, I've yet to need kneecap replacement.

Looking back, I could have been seriously injured in that fall. I remember watching the 500 pound boulder roll over the waterfall alongside me. I recall wondering if it was going to crush me—but it didn't, and I am so glad God preserved me. I could have been paired with a less capable doctor. I could be dealing with daily arthritis in my knee or other problems. I had no idea at the time, but I can appreciate all of that when I look back.

Over the past 34 years Family Council had times that felt like falling over a waterfall and landing face-down on the rocks. We've felt alone and had to hobble back home after a defeat. But every time, we've had good friends like you who stand with us, who lift us up in prayer, who support us financially, and who sometimes are a crutch for us to lean on. Thank you for being there, and thank you for being our friend. We all make a great team that gets a lot done. Here's what we see coming in 2023.

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Executive Director Jerry Cox

## MY THOUGHTS: ARKANSAS NEEDS TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM DRAG SHOWS AND OTHER ADULT PERFORMANCES

Arkansas needs a law that protects children from drag shows and other adult performances. That’s why my team and I were glad when Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R – Branch) and Rep. Mary Bentley (R – Perryville) filed S.B. 43 prohibiting adult performances—including drag shows and drag performances—on public property or in view of children. This bill would help prevent drag shows at public libraries, public schools, or anywhere else where children might be.

Over the past few years public schools, colleges, and libraries in Arkansas have scheduled or promoted drag performances — including performances intended for children. Some of these events have been canceled following public backlash. At public libraries in particular there has been a push to let men dressed in exaggerated, hyper-sexualized female costumes read books

to children. Last year Family Council was alerted about a drag performance at an LGBT Pride festival held on public property in Batesville. During the event, children were invited on stage with the men who were dressed in drag. Our team found photos on Facebook from the event showing small children on stage with drag queens. I thought about including some of the photos in this letter, but I just wasn’t comfortable sharing pictures of children in a situation like that. I know many people would find it disturbing.

Drag shows and adult performances should not take place on public property, and they don’t belong anywhere near children. S.B. 43 would protect children from these performances. LGBT groups already are working against the bill, but we believe Arkansas’ lawmakers will pass it. When it comes to protecting children, there’s simply too much at stake.

### Good Bills and Bad Bills as of January 13

Legislation at the capitol changes daily. Bills get filed, withdrawn, amended, defeated, passed, and vetoed very quickly. Below is a list of good and bad bills that we are working on as of January 13. Visit [FamilyCouncil.org](http://FamilyCouncil.org) or call our office at (501) 375-7000 for more recent information about these measures and others.

**S.B. 43 (Decency):** This *good* bill by Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R – Branch) and Rep. Mary Bentley (R – Perryville) prohibits adult performances—including drag shows and drag performances—on public property or in view of children. Family Council supports this bill.

**H.B. 1098 (Pro-Life):** This *good* bill by Rep. Julie Mayberry (R – Hensley) and Sen. Missy Irvin (R – Mountain View) permits Safe Haven Baby Boxes at volunteer fire stations in Arkansas. Family Council supports this bill.

**H.B. 1006 (Abortion):** This *good* bill by Rep. Aaron Pilkington (R — Knoxville) would require an employer that covers abortions or travel expenses related to abortions to also provide 16 weeks of paid maternity leave to employees in Arkansas. Family Council supports this bill.

**H.C.R. 1005 (Religious Freedom):** This *good* measure by Rep. Mary Bentley (R – Perryville) and Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R – Branch) declares January 16, 2023, “Religious Freedom Day” in Arkansas. Family Council supports this measure.

**S.B. 4 (National Security):** This *good* bill by Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R – Branch) and Rep. Mary Bentley (R – Perryville)

restricts access to TikTok on computers, tablets, phones, and other devices owned by the State of Arkansas. Security experts have raised concerns about TikTok, because of the social media platforms close association with China and the Chinese Communist Party. Family Council supports this bill.

**H.B. 1024 (Expanding Public Drinking):** This *bad* bill by Rep. David Ray (R – Maumelle) and Sen. Matt McKee (R – Hot Springs) would let cities and towns that do not collect advertising and promotion taxes on hotels and restaurants establish entertainment districts where public drinking is legal. This would let communities authorize public drinking in entertainment districts even if the community does not cater toward hospitality and tourism. That has the potential to expand public drinking in Arkansas. Family Council opposes this bill.



From Left: Family Council staff members Leslie Byrd, Jerry Cox, Erin Hogan, and Charisse Dean at the inauguration of Gov. Sarah Sanders.



## Governor Sanders Issues Executive Orders Prohibiting CRT, TikTok

Shortly after her inauguration, Governor Sarah Sanders issued executive orders addressing critical race theory (CRT) in public schools and use of the Chinese-owned social media application TikTok on state networks. In her executive order on CRT, the governor notes,

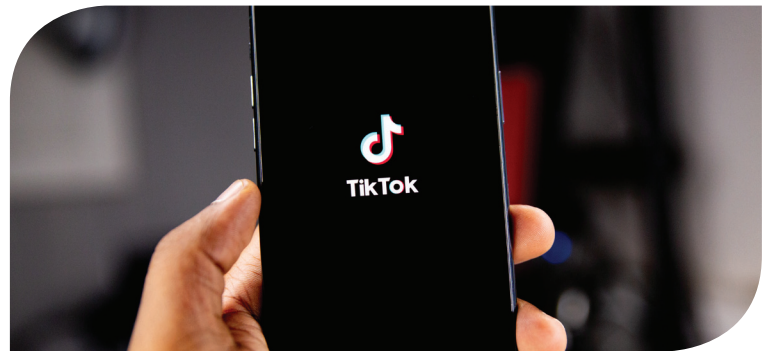
Critical Race Theory (CRT) is antithetical to the traditional American values of neutrality, equality, and fairness. It emphasizes skin color as a person's primary characteristic, thereby resurrecting segregationist values, which America has fought so hard to reject; ... The Constitution of the State of Arkansas and the Constitution of the United States of America recognize the equal value of every individual, and provide equal protection under the law, regardless of color, creed, race, ethnicity, sex, age, marital status, familial status, disability, religion, and national origin.

The order goes on to direct the state Secretary of Education to review the Department of Education's rules and policies and remove anything that promotes critical race theory. In recent years, parents have expressed concern about critical theory in Arkansas' public schools and universities. As we have written before, Arkansans should oppose racism, but critical theory isn't the way to do it. Critical theory wrongly teaches that those who have power always use it to oppress those who don't have power. According to critical race theory, institutions—such as the church, family, government, or law—are always tools of oppression. It's like saying that good and evil are just the result of human institutions instead of the good or evil in every human heart. When educators promote critical theory to students, the consequences for children are serious.

Gov. Sanders also issued an executive order prohibiting the Chinese-owned social media platform TikTok on state computer systems, saying,

Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this Order, the Director of the [Office of State Procurement], in consultation with the Director of the [Division of Information Systems], shall implement efficient and effective plans to uninstall, disconnect, and prevent the use of TikTok with respect to all state networks and state-issued devices...and to prevent all future installations, connections, or uses of TikTok on such networks and devices.

TikTok is the most popular social media platform in the world, with a billion users worldwide and 135 million in the U.S. However, security experts are bothered by the application's possible ties to the Chinese Communist Party. If the Chinese Communist Party can exert influence over TikTok, the CCP may be able to harvest data and manipulate people on the world's largest social media platform. Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R – Branch) and Rep. Mary Bentley (R – Perryville) have already filed S.B. 4 to restrict access to TikTok on computers, tablets, phones, and other devices owned by the State of Arkansas. The governor's executive order addresses this issue as well. S.B. 4 and Gov. Sanders' executive order do not ban TikTok for every Arkansan, but they would eliminate TikTok on devices and computer networks that belong to the State of Arkansas.



### Policy Points: Finding a "School Choice" Program That Works for Home Schoolers in Arkansas

By David Cox, Family Council

Governor Sanders and some members of the Arkansas Legislature have said that school choice will be an important topic during the 2023 session at the capitol. In other states, school choice legislation typically gives students more options in education. In Arizona, for example, lawmakers created a scholarship program that families can

use to pay for school tuition or other education expenses. As of January 15, we're still waiting to see what type of school choice legislation Arkansas' lawmakers may file.

As a rule, Family Council and our home school office, the Education Alliance, support school choice. That's part of the reason we have championed home schooling in Arkansas for the past 30 years. Home schooling gives families a choice when it comes to educating their children. The State

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Assistant Director  
David Cox

## Finding a “School Choice” Program That Works for Home Schoolers in Arkansas *(continued)*

of Arkansas needs to be sure that it treats home schoolers fairly if it creates a school choice program this year.

Some people may think home schooling is so different from public or private education that school choice legislation shouldn't even address home schoolers. The reality is Arkansas law treats home schooling as a legitimate form of non-public education. Arkansas' compulsory attendance law says parents must enroll their children in a public, private, parochial, or home school. If you read Arkansas law very literally, “home school” isn't just studying at home. The state code treats a “home school” as a type of school where parents enroll their children by filing the Notice of Intent

to Home School form every year—it just happens to be a “school” that parents provide for their children at home.


Arkansas law treats home schooling as a legitimate form of non-public education. That's why school choice legislation should be fair and equitable to home schoolers. It shouldn't deny home schoolers opportunities or implement new requirements on home schoolers. It wouldn't be right for the State of Arkansas to extend school choice benefits to children in private school but not offer those same benefits to children who home school. That's why our team is committed to working for school choice legislation that is fair and equitable for home schoolers.

### HERE'S HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Right now our office is focused on the Arkansas Legislature. When the legislature is in session, every member of our staff gets involved in some way. Charisse Dean, Luke McCoy, Erin Hogan, and I are talking to state legislators. David Cox reviews every bill filed at the capitol, and Zoe Dean and Ethan Keller are helping him with legislative research. Lisa Crook, our home school director, is communicating with home schoolers about laws that affect them. Leslie Byrd and Doris Cox both are taking phone calls from supporters and sharing information about bills.

Your friendship and support have helped us accomplish so much, and they can help us accomplish so much more in the coming months. I always tell our friends that your donations are like putting fuel in the gas tank. They help us get where we need to go. That's why I hope you will send a generous, tax-deductible gift to Family Council today, if you are able. I never want anyone to feel pressured to give. Just know that if you decide to support us at this time, you will help us have a successful session at the Arkansas Legislature.

**Thank you for standing with us.** Give us a call if you ever want to visit our office or have us show you around the Arkansas Capitol Building sometime.

Sincerely,  
  
Jerry Cox, President

*Thank you!!*

**P.S. I want you to know that 2023 is off to a good start at Family Council.** We are over at the capitol every day that the lawmakers are in session right now. We have a lot of good legislation we want to see pass this year, and we are prepared to fight against any bad measures that are filed. Your generous support makes all of our work possible. Thank you!



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**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.

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