



**FAMILY  
COUNCIL**

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**JUL/AUG 2023  
UPDATE LETTER**

## *Dear Friends,*

When I was a boy, old people all seemed to have a trunk. Not the kind on a tree or an elephant, but the kind in which you store your keepsakes and prized possessions.

For kids, the contents of a trunk or chest was strictly off limits without adult supervision, and even then if you held any of its contents in your hands, there seemed to be at least two or three other adults cautioning you not to drop it, tear it, or handle it with unclean hands.

My grandparents had a trunk. One day my grandmother opened it and showed me some of its contents. There was a platter made in England, my grandfather's World War One New Testament, some letters he had written to her during the war, and a worn box of very old photographs. We looked at each photograph as she described in detail all the people—especially her school pictures in front of the one-room schoolhouse around 1900.

I don't remember what else was in the trunk, but I remember how the trunk smelled. You know what I mean. It was the smell of old wood and leather and peeling varnish. It was old newspapers and a hundred years of country homestead smells all combined. How ever you describe it, for me it smelled like mystery, excitement, and intrigue.

Now that I'm approaching the age my grandmother was when she opened that trunk, I think about how to pass a little bit of that mystery, excitement, and intrigue on to my five grandsons and one granddaughter—all of whom are under age 11. So here is what I did a few years ago.

I created a treasure chest for my grandkids, and when Doris and I drive to visit them, we take the treasure chest. It's not nearly as big as a trunk, but it looks like a table-top version of a pirate's treasure chest. I bought it for a few dollars at an estate sale. Then I began to fill it with treasure. Most of the items are used and not worth much. I even scavenged a few items from our kitchen cabinets and junk drawer.

There's an old tape measure, a wooden frog, a small cow bell (my son and daughter-in-law love that one), a socket wrench, a magnifying glass, a cap gun, some old padlocks and keys, a rubber snake, a yoyo, some magnets, an old fashioned hand drill that they can take outside to drill holes in boards, a bird call, a wind up alarm clock, and other "stuff."

When we arrive the grandkids help us unload the car. They take great pleasure in latching onto the handles at each end of the chest and all helping carry it in. They're only allowed to open it with Mom or Dad's permission. But when they do, it is so gratifying for Doris and me to see their sense of mystery at any new items added since the last time—their sense of intrigue about what new thing they can do with padlocks and keys this time, and their excitement at treating some items like old friends that they've not played with in a while.

When I think of my Heavenly Father and this life with its share of troubles and woe, I try to turn to God's spiritual treasure chest, and when I open it I find mystery, excitement, and intrigue. There is peace, forgiveness, joy, faith, hope, love, and an inexhaustible amount of good. What a treasure! What a blessing!

At Family Council we've enjoyed God's treasure chest of blessings for 34 years. In fact, He has channeled many of those blessings coming our way through the hands of good folks like you. Even when the going gets tough, I am inspired knowing that joy really does come in the morning. I am comforted that God's treasure chest is there, and that we can reach into it and spread His goodness to everyone around us. Now let me tell you more about how we are blessed and how we are working to bless you and everyone who lives in our great state.

**414 S. Pulaski St., Suite 2 • Little Rock, AR 72201 • 501-375-7000 • [info@familycouncil.org](mailto:info@familycouncil.org)**



Executive Director Jerry Cox

## MY THOUGHTS: ARKANSAS' ABORTION LAWS ARE SAVING LIVES

Based on new reports from the State of Arkansas, our team estimates reversing *Roe v. Wade* in June of last year saved approximately 1,500 unborn children in Arkansas during the second half of 2022. More than one thousand children will get to live and grow because of the pro-life laws that the Arkansas General Assembly passed. That is something to celebrate!

On June 1 the Arkansas Department of Health released its annual abortion reports. The documents reveal 1,621 abortions were performed in Arkansas during 2022. The reports note that on June 24, 2022, abortion became prohibited in Arkansas except to save the life of the mother, and the statistics seem to indicate that abortion virtually ended after the supreme court reversed *Roe v. Wade*. All in all, these reports are great news. They show that Arkansas' pro-life laws are protecting women and saving unborn children. Arkansas has successfully prohibited abortion except to save the life of the mother.

The reports also underscore why it is so important that the Arkansas Legislature voted to appropriate one million dollars this year to help women with unplanned pregnancies. Most of the abortions performed last year were on single moms. It isn't enough simply to outlaw abortion. If we truly want to end abortion, we have to help women with unplanned pregnancies. Arkansas is home to more than 60 organizations that assist pregnant women—including some 45 pregnancy resource centers. The money that the State of Arkansas appropriated this year will make it possible for women to receive help from these good organizations. Protecting women and unborn children from abortion has been a team effort, and Arkansas wouldn't have gotten this far without a whole host of pro-lifers leading the way on this issue. Pro-lifers have worked hard to make Arkansas the state it is today. These reports show that hard work is paying off.

## Arkansas' Abortion Rate Plummeted 77% in 30 Years!

Since 1991, Arkansas' overall abortion rate plummeted a staggering 77%. Throughout the 1980s, abortion generally increased in Arkansas and elsewhere around the country—and it didn't show signs of decreasing any time soon. Then around 1992 abortion went down just slightly in Arkansas. The numbers fluctuated, but by the early 2000s we were certain the state's abortion figures actually were trending downward.

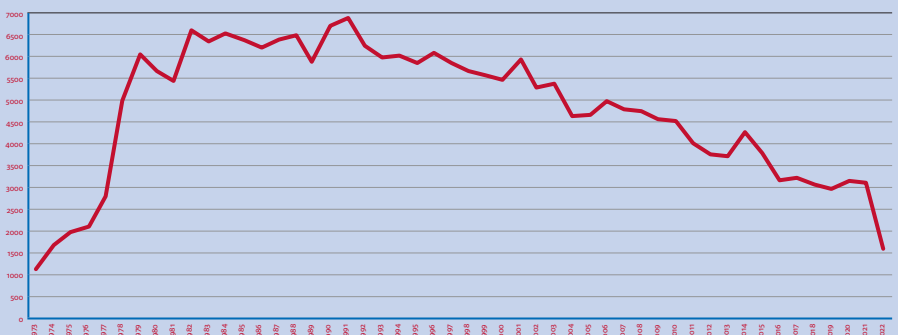
In 2009 Family Council, Arkansas Right to Life, and other pro-life leaders began working together to find new ways to stop to abortion. We believed if we could reduce the demand for abortion by 20% or more, abortionists would close shop. Groups like 40 Days for Life organized massive prayer vigils outside abortion facilities while others of us focused on passing new pro-life laws. Pro-life volunteers prayed with women and directed them to pro-life pregnancy resource centers where they could receive actual help. As a result, Arkansas' abortion figures began to drop faster and faster.

Along the way we were able to work with our friends in the Arkansas Legislature to secure passage of laws prohibiting abortion except to save the life of the mother once *Roe v. Wade*

was reversed. Those good laws went into effect a little over a year ago. Preemptively, we worked with lawmakers to appropriate \$1 million in grant funding for pregnancy resource centers in January of 2022. That funding has helped centers provide actual support to women with unplanned pregnancies in the wake of the 2022 *Dobbs* decision that overturned *Roe*. This year the Arkansas Legislature voted to renew that funding for the state's 2023–2024 budget cycle.

It has taken hard work and tremendous dedication, but pro-lifers have successfully worked together to virtually end abortion in Arkansas—and we are continuing that effort by supporting women and families in the state. All of that is something to celebrate.

NUMBER OF ABORTIONS IN ARKANSAS SINCE 1973



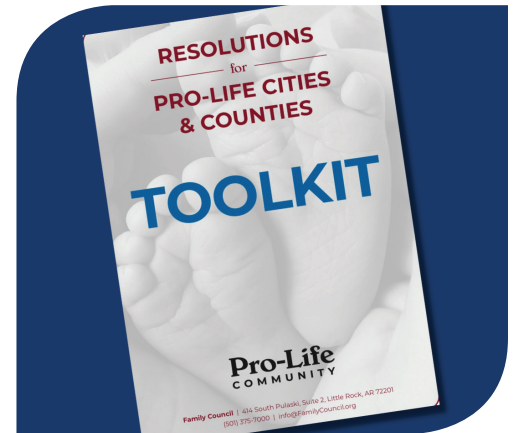
## This One Law From 2015 Saved 3,500 Unborn Children

In 2015 the Arkansas Legislature enacted what may possibly be the best informed-consent law for abortion in America. The Woman's Right to Know Act of 2015 required abortionists to give women all the facts about abortion up front—including facts about abortion's risks, consequences, and alternatives. The law also requires abortionists to give women 72 hours to consider all options before making a final decision. Each year the State of Arkansas releases data showing how many women received information about abortion under the 2015 informed-consent law and how many women had abortions. By comparing these numbers, we can estimate the number of women who chose not to have an abortion after receiving the informed-consent information.

From August 1, 2015, through June 24, 2022, Family Council estimates more than 3,500 unborn children were saved from abortion by the Woman's Right to Know Act. To put it another way, better than one out of every 100 children under the age of five in Arkansas is alive thanks to this measure. Think about that! Thousands of children are here today because of a single law the legislature passed eight years ago. It's possible you have met one of these children without even realizing it. It's doubtful any of us will ever know or understand the full impact of the pro-life movement this side of eternity, but one thing is certain: The Woman's Right to Know Act of 2015 has made a tremendous difference in the lives of women and children in Arkansas.

## Family Council Releases New Toolkit to Help Communities in Arkansas Affirm They Are Pro-Life

In June Family Council released a newly revised toolkit designed to give citizens the resources and information they need to enact a Pro-Life Resolution in their community. In 2021 the Arkansas Legislature passed a measure affirming that cities can pass resolutions designating themselves as Pro-Life. Since then a number of cities and counties in Arkansas have passed nonbinding pro-life resolutions, and today more than one million Arkansans live in a Pro-Life City of Pro-Life County. This year lawmakers passed Act 699 by Sen. Joshua Bryant (R – Rogers) and Rep. Kendon Underwood (R – Cave Springs). This good law lets other political subdivisions of the state pass resolutions affirming that they are Pro-Life as well. That means, for example, a local school board could pass a resolution declaring the school district to be pro-life. In the coming months we plan to expand the number of pro-life communities in Arkansas. You can download a free copy of our pro-life resolutions toolkit at [FamilyCouncil.org](http://FamilyCouncil.org). Call our office at (501) 375-7000 for additional information.



## Atheist Group Demands Crawford County Sheriff End Inmate Baptisms

In May the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter to the Crawford County Sheriff over baptisms that occurred at the county's correctional facility earlier this year. According to local news reports and a Facebook post by the county sheriff's office, 38 incarcerated men and women were baptized at the facility in April. Jail chaplains and Kibler Baptist Church reportedly held the baptisms at the inmates' request. However, the Freedom From Religion Foundation accused the county sheriff's

This isn't the first time the Freedom From Religion Foundation has been active in Arkansas. Last fall the atheist group issued a statement celebrating the defeat of religious freedom amendment Issue 3, which narrowly failed at the ballot box in Arkansas. The Freedom From Religion Foundation also has opposed public prayer at meetings and gatherings in Arkansas, and the organization is part of a lawsuit to have a monument of the Ten Commandments removed from the Arkansas Capitol grounds.

The truth is that even inmates behind bars have religious liberties. Their freedoms may be restricted, but baptism is fundamental to Christianity, and a county correctional facility simply should not prevent it from occurring. Jail chaplains help inmates exercise their religious liberties appropriately, and it is perfectly acceptable for chaplains to work with the churches. After all, churches often are the ones who ordained the chaplains in the first place. All of that makes the Freedom From Religion Foundation's complaint rather ridiculous.

**The truth is that even inmates behind bars have religious liberties.**

office of "promoting religion and explicitly affiliating itself with Christianity" and called the situation "one of the more serious and offensive First Amendment violations" the group had encountered from a county sheriff.



## Policy Points: TikTok’s “Diet of Darkness” Shows Arkansas Was Right to Pass Social Media Safety Act

By David Cox, Assistant Director

Despite employing some 40,000 content moderators, social media giant TikTok still serves teens a steady “diet of darkness.” That’s what columnist Julie Jargon recently noted in the *Wall Street Journal*. Jargon highlighted a study in which researchers created TikTok accounts posing as fictitious

13-year-olds. TikTok’s algorithm quickly inundated the accounts with videos promoting eating disorders, self-harm, and suicide ideation. A 2021 *Wall Street Journal* investigation found that TikTok naturally steered viewers toward this type of dangerous content—meaning this problem has existed for quite some time.

At more than a billion users worldwide—including some 135 million in the U.S.—TikTok is the planet’s largest social media network, and inappropriate content isn’t the only concern some people have about it. Chinese company ByteDance owns TikTok. Late last year FBI Director Christopher Wray voiced concerns about the Chinese Communist

Party’s ability to influence ByteDance and TikTok. If the CCP can influence TikTok, it may be able to control content, harvest user data, and manipulate people on the world’s largest social media platform.

**All of this underscores that Arkansas lawmakers were right to pass the Social Media Safety Act this year.** This good law by Sen. Tyler Dees (R – Siloam Springs) and Rep. Jon Eubanks (R – Paris) requires social media companies to verify users’ ages, and it prohibits them from letting minors access the social media platform without parental consent. The law does not completely block children from accessing social media platforms, but it does require tech giants like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok to make sure kids have permission from their parents before opening a social media account. Even if TikTok weren’t serving teenagers a “steady diet of darkness,” do we really think it’s OK for a tech company to let a teenager in Arkansas share videos of herself on the company’s social media platform without her mom or dad knowing about it? The Social Media Safety Act helps protect children online.

## Heavy Marijuana Use Increases Risk of Schizophrenia in Young Men: New Study

Young men who use marijuana heavily are at an increased risk of schizophrenia, according to a recent study by the National Institutes of Health. Researchers estimated that as many as 30% of schizophrenia cases among men between the ages 21 and 30 might have been prevented had the men not used marijuana. The study noted that THC levels in marijuana have “increased dramatically” since 2009,

and that THC may trigger or worsen schizophrenia. This is not the first time researchers have found a connection between marijuana use and serious mental health problems. All of this underscores that Arkansas voters made the right call last November when they rejected marijuana at the ballot box. Marijuana may be many things, but “harmless” simply is not one of them.

## Library Lawsuits Mounting in Arkansas

Lawsuits over library books and legislation are picking up in Arkansas. In Crawford County, citizens have sued the county judge, quorum court, library board, and interim library director, alleging “unlawful censorship” of pro-LGBT children’s books at the county’s library branches. Normally when parents sue a library over these kinds of books it’s because the parents want the books removed from the library. In this case, Crawford County did the right thing by removing the pro-LGBT books from the children’s area and placing them in a separate section of the library. The people who filed this lawsuit actually want the pro-LGBT books put back in the children’s area.

Meanwhile, in Pulaski County the Central Arkansas Library System’s board voted unanimously in May to file a lawsuit against the state over Act 372 of 2023. This good law by Sen. Dan Sullivan (R – Russellville) and Rep. Justin Gonzales (R – Okolona) prohibits giving or sending a child harmful material that contains nudity or sexual activity. The measure helps address inappropriate sexual material in public libraries. Gov. Sanders signed Act 372 into law this past spring, and it is set to take effect August 1. When states like California and Massachusetts first began seriously discussing same-sex marriage 20 years ago, nobody could have imagined that children’s books about gay pride parades

*(continued on following page)*



## Library Lawsuits Mounting in Arkansas (continued)

and drag queens in public libraries would become a major flashpoint in our culture—but here we are.

Communities can take steps to remove objectionable material from their local libraries. Library boards and librarians have leeway to establish selection criteria and make decisions about the kinds of material available on the library's shelves. Library patrons generally can use a Material Reconsideration Form to ask libraries to remove inap-

propriate material. And voters can call on their elected officials to enact laws protecting children from objectionable material in public libraries. Family Council is working on a set of resources citizens can use to address objectionable material at their local libraries. Those resources should become available later this summer. You can call our office at (501) 375-7000 for more information.

## Federal Lawsuit in Maryland Highlights Importance of Laws Passed in Arkansas

On May 24, three families—one Muslim, one Roman Catholic, and one Ukrainian Orthodox—filed a lawsuit against Maryland's Montgomery County Board of Education. In March the school district shifted its policy concerning objectionable material, announcing parents would no longer be notified about LGBT content at school and would no longer be allowed to opt their children out of pro-LGBT material. The school district's policy change reportedly was intended to teach children to be more LGBT inclusive.

World News Group writes:

[W]hen the Montgomery County school district introduced pro-LGBT children's books into its curriculum last year, all three families decided the content of the books didn't line up with their religious beliefs about sexuality and marriage. Since the state of Maryland and the Montgomery County district both allow students to opt out of instruction related to family life and human sexuality, the parents declined to have their children in class for the readings. But in March, the school board announced that teachers would no longer offer notice about the LGBT material and students could not opt out, according to a federal lawsuit filed against the board [in May].

The lawsuit alleges that the "Pride Storybooks" in question are not age appropriate for children and that the books "promote one-sided transgender ideology, encourage gender transitioning, and focus excessively on romantic infatuation—with no parental notification or opportunity to opt out." The complaint filed in court includes photographs and explanations of some of the objectionable material in the books.

For example, the lawsuit alleges that the book *Pride Puppy* "invites three- and four-year-olds to look for images of things they might find at a pride parade, including an 'intersex [flag],' a '[drag] king' and '[drag] queen,' 'leather,' 'underwear,' and an image of a celebrated LGBTQ activist and sex worker, 'Marsha P. Johnson.'" It also highlights pro-

LGBT books *Love, Violet* and *Born Ready: The True Story Of A Boy Named Penelope*.

These "Pride Storybooks" are similar to pro-LGBT books that have caused controversy in libraries in Arkansas. In June Family Council learned that *Born Ready* was available at the Crawford County Library System and the Crowley's Ridge Regional Library. *Pride Puppy* was available at the Crowley's Ridge Regional Library, the Arkansas River Valley Library System, and the North Little Rock Public Library System. And *Love, Violet* was available at the Crawford County Library System, the North Little Rock Public Library System, multiple locations in the Central Arkansas Library System, and other libraries in Arkansas. All of these books target young children.

In Arkansas, lawmakers have taken steps to keep this type of material out of public school classrooms. For example, Act 237 of 2023—the LEARNS Act—is the omnibus education law that helps prohibit critical race theory in Arkansas' public schools, and it protects elementary students from inappropriate sexual material at school. Likewise, Act 372 of 2023 prohibits giving or sending a child harmful material that contains nudity or sexual activity. Both of these laws help ensure that children's books in public schools and public libraries are age appropriate. Schools and libraries have no business using taxpayer dollars to infringe parental rights and promote pro-LGBT ideology to children. These laws help address that problem in Arkansas.



## Join Us for Our Worldview and Leadership Summit in Little Rock August 17 and 18!

We would like to invite you to join us for *Foundations of Truth Summit: Building Biblical Worldview and Statesmanship* in Little Rock on August 17 and 18. Last year Family Council hosted a worldview conference in Little Rock—and it was a huge success! We're planning an even bigger summit meeting on biblical leadership and statesmanship in Little Rock next month. Enclosed is a flier with additional details about how you can come to that event.



Family Council President Jerry Cox addresses attendees at the 2022 worldview summit in Little Rock.

### LAYING UP A LASTING TREASURE

The treasure chest I made for my grandchildren reminds me that Jesus had a lot to say about treasure. In the gospels, we find treasure woven throughout His sermons and parables—stories about men and women who found treasure, lost treasure, and squandered treasure. Jesus tells us the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who discovered treasure hidden in a field—or like a merchant who found a pearl of great price—or like a man who entrusted his treasures to his servants before traveling to a far country. Jesus exhorted His disciples to lay up for themselves “treasures in heaven.” But Jesus’ most serious words about treasure may be in Matthew 6:21—“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

To be clear: In the gospels, salvation through Jesus is the ultimate treasure. But at Family Council, we don’t lobby lawmakers or educate voters because we treasure the things of this world. We do it, because we treasure the things of Heaven.

When I say I hope you will send a generous, tax-deductible gift to Family Council, if you are able, it isn’t just so that we can fund an organization or accomplish a lot of really good work—although that’s important. It’s so that we can fulfill the calling that God has placed on each of us. When you give, you and I both get to be part of that mission together. That’s the heart that drives what we do.

**I want you to know I treasure your friendship and support.** Family Council recently turned 34 years old, and we simply could not have made it this far without friends like you. **Thank you. Please let me know if there is ever anything we can do for you.**

Sincerely,

Thank you!!

Jerry Cox, President

P.S. **There’s so much good news to share about what’s going on in Arkansas**—especially when it comes to protecting women and children from abortion. Remember to check [FamilyCouncil.org](http://FamilyCouncil.org) for daily news and commentary about issues that matter to Arkansas. Thank you for your support!!



**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.