



**FAMILY  
COUNCIL**

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**NOVEMBER 2023  
UPDATE LETTER**

*Dear Friends,*

There's something about taking a walk through the woods just before sunrise on a crisp November morning. You can feel the chill in the air and hear the frost crunch on the leaves beneath your feet. It sharpens your senses and unlocks distant memories. It's a good time to reflect on the past and look forward to the future.

Back about 25 Novembers ago, I traveled as one of the adult leaders on a Boy Scout trip to the Civil War Battlefield at Shiloh in Tennessee. Our sons' scout troop hiked a solid 12 miles over one of the trails. Along the way, the boys checked markers and monuments to complete a questionnaire to earn medals for the hike. Of course, we had to stop by the gift shop to stock up on snacks, caps, t-shirts, and replica Civil War swords. But most of us at one point or another seemed to take time to quietly reflect on the significance of the battlefield we visited.

It's an odd feeling to stand at the edge of a silent empty field and think about the people who struggled there—the smells that filled the air—how loud it must have been. The great grandparents of a friend of mine gave him a first-hand account about hearing the booming of the cannons near their home during the battle. I thought about the soldiers who marched, camped, ate, and fought there in 1862. I wondered what went through their minds as they looked across the same field at their adversaries all those years before me.

There's a lot to be said about solitude and reflection—and how it changes us for the better. Maybe it's that solitude that equips us to change the world around us for the better. Even now, I love being in a solitary place where I can dream about how things were and how things can be. Later this month our country will celebrate Thanksgiving. It's a wonderful time when our thoughts turn to hearth and home, and we remember all the blessings that we enjoy. But our country will observe another holiday between now and then. November 11 marks Veterans Day. It's a day set aside to remember and give thanks—for our nation's veterans.

On November 11, 1985, President Ronald Reagan laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, Virginia. Shortly afterward, he gave a speech about remembering our nation's veterans. In it, he said,

It is, in a way, an odd thing to honor those who died in defense of our country, in defense of us, in wars far away. The imagination plays a trick. We see these soldiers in our mind as old and wise. We see them as something like the Founding Fathers, grave and gray haired. But most of them were boys when they died, and they gave up two lives—the one they were living and the one they would have lived. When they died, they gave up their chance to be husbands and fathers and grandfathers. They gave up their chance to be revered old men. They gave up everything for our country, for us. And all we can do is remember.

This November, I hope you will find a few quiet moments to remember—to reflect about the past and to dream about the future. Family Council has worked to promote, protect, and strengthen traditional family values in Arkansas for almost 35 years. Nearly everything we've accomplished started as a dream—a God-given belief that we could make Arkansas a better place to live, work, and raise a family. Over the years, a lot of people have poured themselves into making those dreams a reality. Often I still remember them. And now let me tell you a little about the past few weeks and about the dreams we have for the future—and how you can be part of them.



Executive Director Jerry Cox

## My Thoughts: Go to [ArkansasReport.com](https://ArkansasReport.com) to See How Your Lawmakers Voted

By Jerry Cox, Executive Director

“Jerry, how did my lawmaker vote?”

That’s a question I hear a lot as I talk to people around the state. I imagine you’ve wondered that a time or two over the years. We all want to know if our state senators or state representatives actually vote the way we wish they would. Family Council Action Committee’s 2023 Arkansas Report helps voters answer that question. You may have seen Family Council Action Committee’s recent press release explaining the report card.

The 2023 report card scored 25 laws passed by the Arkansas House and Arkansas Senate. Legislative topics ranged from right-to-life and education to the LGBT agenda, religious liberty, and other issues. Lawmakers earned letter grades ranging from A-F based on how they voted on the bills. Lawmakers had to vote on at least 60% of the bills in the report card in order to receive a letter

grade. Legislators who earned an ‘A’ also received Family Council Action Committee’s 2023 Statesman Award.

The Arkansas Report is not an endorsement of any candidate, elected official, or political party. It does not measure any lawmaker’s integrity, commitment to their faith, work ethic, or rapport with Family Council Action Committee. It is simply an impartial report on how each legislator voted when it came to issues like abortion, religious liberty, the LGBT agenda, education, and other topics Arkansans care about.

**You can see your lawmakers’ votes and grades online at [ArkansasReport.com](https://ArkansasReport.com).**

## Seventy-Seven Lawmakers Earn ‘2023 Statesman Awards’

In October Family Council Action Committee announced that 20 state senators and 57 state representatives have earned the 2023 Statesman Award. Statesman Award recipients earned the award based on how they voted on 25 different bills the Arkansas General Assembly passed earlier this year. Those bills were reflected in Family Council Action Committee’s Arkansas Report at [ArkansasReport.com](https://ArkansasReport.com). According to a press release, the following Arkansas legislators received the 2023 Statesman Award:

Sen. Justin Boyd (R - Fort Smith)	Rep. Mark Berry (R - Ozark)	Rep. Robin Lundstrum (R - Elm Springs)
Sen. Alan Clark (R - Lonsdale)	Rep. Harlan Breaux (R - Holiday Island)	Rep. John Maddox (R - Mena)
Sen. Steve Crowell (R - Magnolia)	Rep. Matt Brown (R - Conway)	Rep. Mindy McAlindon (R - Centerton)
Sen. Tyler Dees (R - Siloam Springs)	Rep. Karilyn Brown (R - Sherwood)	Rep. Rick McClure (R - Malvern)
Sen. Jim Dotson (R - Bentonville)	Rep. Rebecca Burkes (R - Lowell)	Rep. Ron McNair (R - Harrison)
Sen. Jane English (R - North Little Rock)	Rep. Frances Cavanaugh (R - Walnut Ridge)	Rep. Stephen Meeks (R - Greenbrier)
Sen. Scott Flippo (R - Bull Shoals)	Rep. Cameron Cooper (R - Romance)	Rep. Jon Milligan (R - Lake City)
Sen. Ben Gilmore (R - Crossett)	Rep. Cindy Crawford (R - Fort Smith)	Rep. Jeremiah Moore (R - Clarendon)
Sen. Kim Hammer (R - Benton)	Rep. Matt Duffield (R - Russellville)	Rep. Stetson Painter (R - Mountain Home)
Sen. Bart Hester (R - Cave Springs)	Rep. Les Eaves (R - Searcy)	Rep. Shad Pearce (R - Batesville)
Sen. Blake Johnson (R - Corning)	Rep. Jon Eubanks (R - Paris)	Rep. Aaron Pilkington (R - Clarksville)
Sen. Mark Johnson (R - Little Rock)	Rep. Brian Evans (R - Cabot)	Rep. Chad Puryear (R - Hindsville)
Sen. John Payton (R - Wilburn)	Rep. Lanny Fite (R - Benton)	Rep. R. Scott Richardson (R - Bentonville)
Sen. Clint Penzo (R - Springdale)	Rep. Charlene Fite (R - Van Buren)	Rep. Marcus Richmond (R - Harvey)
Sen. Jim Petty (R - Van Buren)	Rep. Jack Fortner (R - Yellville)	Rep. Ryan Rose (R - Van Buren)
Sen. Terry Rice (R - Waldron)	Rep. Tony Furman (R - Benton)	Rep. Johnny Rye (R - Trumann)
Sen. Matt Stone (R - Camden)	Rep. Jimmy Gazaway (R - Paragould)	Rep. Bart Schulz (R - Cave City)
Sen. Gary Stubblefield (R - Branch)	Rep. Zack Gramlich (R - Fort Smith)	Rep. Trey Steimel (R - Pocahontas)
Sen. Dan Sullivan (R - Jonesboro)	Rep. Delia Haak (R - Centerton)	Rep. Dwight Tosh (R - Jonesboro)
Sen. David Wallace (R - Leachville)	Rep. Grant Hodges (R - Centerton)	Rep. Kendon Underwood (R - Cave Springs)
Rep. Brandon Achor (R - Maumelle)	Rep. DeAnna Hodges (R - Springdale)	Rep. Steve Unger (R - Springdale)
Rep. Wade Andrews (R - Camden)	Rep. Mike Holcomb (R - Pine Bluff)	Rep. Steven Walker (R - Horseshoe Bend)
Rep. Sonia Barker (R - Smackover)	Rep. Lane Jean (R - Magnolia)	Rep. Jeff Wardlaw (R - Warren)
Rep. Howard Beaty (R - Crossett)	Rep. Lee Johnson (R - Greenwood)	Rep. Carlton Wing (R - North Little Rock)
Rep. Rick Beck (R - Center Ridge)	Rep. Jack Ladyman (R - Jonesboro)	Rep. Jeremy Wooldridge (R - Marmaduke)
Rep. Mary Bentley (R - Perryville)	Rep. Wayne Long (R - Bradford)	

## Will Arkansas Be Targeted with a Pro-Abortion Amendment in 2024?

One of the questions many people are asking is whether or not Arkansans will be asked to vote on a pro-abortion amendment in 2024. As of October 1, there are no pro-abortion measures vying for next November's ballot. During the legislative session earlier this year, Rep. Deborah Ferguson (D – West Memphis) filed H.J.R. 1008. This proposal would have amended the Arkansas Constitution to recognize a fundamental right to abortion. However, the Arkansas Legislature did not pass H.J.R. 1008, and the measure officially died when lawmakers adjourned last May.

Over the summer someone anonymously submitted a pair of pro-abortion amendments to the Secretary of State's office. By law, proposed constitutional amendments must go to the Arkansas Attorney General for review before an amendment's backers can begin circulating petitions to place the measure on the ballot. However, the person or person's responsible for these pro-abortion amendments decided to give them to the Secretary of State instead. The amendments received a little media attention over the summer, but nobody knows who was responsible for the measures or why they were submitted to the Secretary of State instead of the A.G.

**We know for a fact that there are entities who would like to run a pro-abortion amendment in Arkansas.** Late last year, pro-abortion groups released statements to the media listing Arkansas as one of the places where they want to pass an abortion amendment. In January our team intercepted a political poll asking voters in Arkansas a series of questions about campaign messaging for an abortion amendment. For example, some of the poll questions were along the lines of, "Does the statement, 'This amendment safeguards reproductive freedom' make you more likely or less likely to vote for the amendment?" The poll also asked respondents to share their opinions of Family Council, Arkansas Right to Life, and Planned Parenthood. Our team estimates the poll cost several thousand dollars.

**The good news for pro-lifers is that placing a pro-abortion amendment on the ballot would require upwards of 90,000 or more valid petition signatures from registered voters.** That takes time, and it takes money. Along the way, we would have opportunities to stop their efforts. Each day that passes, it becomes more and more difficult for pro-abortion groups to muster the resources they would need to place such a measure on the ballot. Abortion is prohibited in Arkansas except to save the life of the mother, and Family Council is fully committed to using every resource at its disposal to protect the sanctity of innocent human life in Arkansas.

*Right: Rep. Deborah Ferguson presents pro-abortion amendment H.J.R. 1008 in committee on March 27. The measure failed to pass at the Arkansas Legislature.*



## Policy Points: Nursing Home PACs Ramping Up Political Donations Ahead of 2024 Elections

*By David Cox, Assistant Director*

Political action committees representing the nursing home industry in Arkansas have begun ramping up their fundraising and political donations ahead of the 2024 elections. Political action committees—or PACs—typically work to elect or defeat candidates for public office. PACs often do that by donating to candidates, by running their own independent campaigns for or against candidates, or by giving money to other PACs. Arkansas law requires political action committees to file quarterly financial reports with the Secretary of State.

Multiple PACs in Arkansas represent corporate nursing home interests. Three prominent ones are the Arkansas Health Care Senate Public Affairs Committee PAC; the Arkansas Health Care House Public Affairs Committee PAC; and the Arkansas Health Care Public Affairs Committee PAC. Altogether, these three PACs have a little over \$200,000 at their disposal, according to reports filed in July. From April 1 to June 30, these three PACs donated \$11,800 to eleven candidates for the state legislature. In May the Arkansas Health Care Public Affairs Committee PAC also gave \$1,000 to the Jobs and Growth PAC in Little Rock. The Jobs and Growth PAC can use that money for donations to candidates or to other PACs.

**In the past, the nursing home industry has lobbied for laws that limit the amount of money that judges and juries can award in lawsuits when a person is injured or killed due to someone else's negligence.** As we and others have said over the years, restricting lawsuits might sound alright when you're talking about people suing a restaurant because they spilled hot coffee on themselves, but it's another thing entirely when you're talking about a grandmother who dies in a nursing home because the facility didn't properly care for her. Sadly, there are too many stories in Arkansas of nursing home residents who died or suffered injuries because the facility neglected their basic care. It is important for judges and juries to be able to hold bad actors accountable and make them pay when their negligence takes the life of another person. That's why for more than 20 years Family Council has opposed efforts to restrict the amount of money awarded in these lawsuits. We simply cannot ignore any legislation that puts a price tag on human life or leaves the door wide open for the nursing home industry to neglect our loved ones.

## Arkansas Attorney General Joins Multistate Coalition Urging Congress to Prevent A.I. From Exploiting Children

In September Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin joined a coalition of state attorneys general urging congress to address the ways in which artificial intelligence may be used to exploit children. In a statement, Attorney General Griffin said, "AI poses a very real threat to our children. This 'new frontier for abuse' opens the door for children to be exploited in new ways, including publishing their location and mimicking their voice and likeness in sexual or other objectionable content."

The bipartisan coalition of attorneys general from across the country expressed concern over how artificial intelligence and "deepfake" technology might be used to generate child sexual abuse material—also known as child pornography. In 2001 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 1496 addressing computer exploitation of a child. The law generally makes it a felony to produce or reproduce child sexual

ual abuse material "by computerized means." At the time there was serious discussion about how CGI and computer software could be used to manufacture child sexual abuse

**Family Council supported the good law they passed.**

material. Of course, in 2001 very few people could have imagined the artificial intelligence technology that exists today, but lawmakers recognized the need to address the issue—and Family Council supported the good law they passed. As technology changes and artificial intelligence advances, lawmakers likely will need to enact new legislation to protect children. That is what this coalition of state attorneys general is calling on lawmakers to do.

## Lawsuit Over Arkansas' SAFE Act Progressing Through Federal Court System

The lawsuit over Arkansas' Save Adolescents From Experimentation (SAFE) Act is still working its way through the federal Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Arkansas Legislature overwhelmingly passed the SAFE Act in 2021. It's a good law that protects children in Arkansas from cross-sex hormones, puberty blockers, and sex-reassignment surgeries. However, the law has been tied up in court for the past two and a half years. U.S. District Judge James Moody in Little Rock has blocked the state from enforcing the SAFE Act. The Arkansas Attorney General's Office has appealed that decision

to the Eighth Circuit. Normally a panel of three judges from the Eighth Circuit would hear and decide the appeal, but in September the A.G.'s team asked that all of the judges on the Eighth Circuit rule in the case. Requesting a hearing before the entire Eighth Circuit skips a step in the appeal process. It also may increase the likelihood that the SAFE Act will be upheld as constitutional. As we have said many times, the Save Adolescents From Experimentation Act is a good law that protects children in Arkansas. We believe our courts ultimately will recognize that fact and uphold this law as constitutional.

## Trial Delayed in Lawsuit Over Ten Commandments Monument

The lawsuit over Arkansas' Ten Commandments Monument was set to go to trial in Little Rock last month, but U.S. District Judge Kristien Baker has once again ordered that the trial be delayed. In 2015 the Arkansas Legislature passed a measure authorizing a privately-funded monument of the Ten Commandments on the State Capitol Building grounds. The monument is identical to one the U.S. Supreme Court ruled constitutional at the Texas Capitol Building some years ago.

Shortly after Arkansas unveiled its monument on the west side of the Capitol Complex, atheist groups and the Satanic Temple joined together in a lawsuit to have it removed from state grounds. The case has languished in court ever since. As we have said time and again over the past eight years, there shouldn't be any-

thing controversial about a monument honoring the significance of the Ten Commandments. Historians have long recognized the Ten Commandments as one of the earliest examples of the rule of law in human history, and they have helped shape laws in countries around the world. Arkansas' monument simply commemorates that legacy.



*Right: Family Council staff members (right) watch the unveiling of Arkansas' Ten Commandments Monument on the west side of the Arkansas Capitol Complex.*

## Federal Judge Blocks Arkansas From Banning Delta-8 THC For Now

On September 7, U.S. District Judge Billy Roy Wilson in Little Rock issued a preliminary injunction blocking the State of Arkansas' ban on Delta-8 THC. Delta-8 is a mind-altering substance made from cannabis, and health experts warn that the drug poses serious risks. For example, from December 1, 2020, to February 28, 2022, the FDA documented 104 "adverse event reports" concerning Delta-8 THC—including hallucinations, vomiting, tremors, anxiety, dizziness, confusion, and loss of consciousness. National poison control centers also received 2,362 Delta-8 THC calls—most of which required evaluation at a healthcare facility.

Arkansas has virtually no restrictions on Delta-8 THC. That's why earlier this year the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 629 of 2023 by Sen. Tyler Dees (R – Siloam Springs) and Rep. Jimmy

Gazaway (R – Paragould). This good law prevents Delta-8 THC from being manufactured via industrial hemp—or cannabis—in Arkansas. The law also places Delta-8, Delta-9, Delta-10 THC, and other psychoactive drugs made from industrial hemp on the list of controlled substances in state law

However, a group of companies that profit from Delta-8 THC are suing to block Act 629 in federal court. Judge Wilson's ruling prevents the state from enforcing Act 629 for the time being, and it schedules the lawsuit over Act 629 to go to trial in August of 2024. Of course, it should not come as any surprise that companies who profit from Delta-8 THC in Arkansas are suing to keep Delta-8 legal. We believe courts ultimately will recognize that Act 629 is a good law that protects Arkansans from dangerous drugs and let the state enforce it.

## Family Council Honors White Hall Couple for 84 Years of Marriage!

In September Family Council recognized Cleovis and Arwilda Whiteside of Whitehall, Arkansas, as Arkansas' Longest Married Couple. Married 84 years, the Whitesides met as children, and they were married just before midnight on July 24, 1939, in Clarendon, Arkansas. Mr. and Mrs. Whiteside have been recognized as Arkansas' Longest Married Couple since 2019, but based on information the Family Council staff has gathered, we believe Cleovis and Arwilda Whiteside actually could be the longest married couple living in the entire United States! Mr. and Mrs. Whiteside are a shining example to us all. We were honored to celebrate their lasting commitment to one another at their church and a private fish fry with their friends and family in Pine

Bluff. The Whitesides made a marriage covenant with one another more than 84 years ago, and, by the grace of God, they kept it. That's something to celebrate!



*Right: Mr. and Mrs. Whiteside are Arkansas' Longest Married Couple for 2023.*

## Family Council Development Director Meets With Arkansas' Congressional Delegation

In September Family Council Director of Development Luke McCoy traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend Family Research Council's Pray, Vote, Stand Summit. While he was there, Luke also met with all six members of Arkansas' congressional delegation. U.S. Senators John Boozman and Tom Cotton and U.S. Representatives Steve Womack, Rick Crawford, Bruce Westerman, and French Hill each took time out of their busy schedules to sit down with Luke and discuss the issues facing our state and country.

One of the points that came out of their conversations was the tremendous sway that entrenched bureaucrats hold over D.C. The U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate hold legislative authority over the federal government, but so do the career government employees working in executive agencies. Congress passes laws, but the bureaucrats responsible for carrying out those laws often have the ability to come up with their own ways of inter-

preting and enforcing them. As one congressman put it, civil service reform is greatly needed in Washington.

Besides meeting individually with Arkansas' congressional delegation, Luke also was able to visit with other conservative leaders and meet presidential hopefuls at the summit itself. Your generous support helps Family Council network with like-minded leaders from around the country and build relationships that strengthen our pro-family work here in Arkansas.



*Right: Luke McCoy (left) and Arkansas Congressman Steve Womack pause for a photo outside the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.*

# GIVING TUESDAY

*Will You Help Us*  
**RAISE AT LEAST \$15K FOR OUR PRO-FAMILY  
WORK ON NOVEMBER 28, 2023?**

Giving Tuesday 2023 will happen later this month on November 28. This is a day when people all over America make it a point to give to churches and charitable organizations. This year some very generous friends have pledged \$15,000 to Family Council as part of our Giving Tuesday 2023 matching gift challenge. **You can help us match their generosity, dollar for dollar, when you donate toward our Giving Tuesday campaign.** You can learn more about our Giving Tuesday goal by visiting [FamilyCouncil.org](http://FamilyCouncil.org) and clicking on the link to our Giving Tuesday 2023 page. You can donate securely toward our \$15,000 matching gift challenge on the website or by mailing a check using the enclosed envelope—just be sure to write “Giving Tuesday 2023” in the memo field. Call our office at (501) 375-7000 if you have any questions or if there is anything we can help you with.

## **YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT CAN HELP US FINISH STRONG FOR 2023**

There are just a few weeks left in the year, and there is so much we want to accomplish. We’re gearing up to survey candidates for public office as part of our 2024 Arkansas Voter’s Guide. We’re already laying plans for legislation that we want to present to our friends in the state legislature. We intend to grow the size of our staff and increase the reach of our network across the state. We’re also assembling resources we can use to oppose a possible abortion amendment or marijuana measure at the ballot box next year. I hope you will send a generous, tax-deductible donation to support our work today, if you are able. **Thank you for standing with us. Please call us any time if there is ever anything my staff or I can do for you.**

Sincerely,

 Thank you!!

Jerry Cox, President

P.S. I hope you will consider partnering with us in our Giving Tuesday matching gift challenge later this month. Arkansas has become a leader in the fight to protect unborn babies from abortion and to protect children and teens from puberty blockers and sex-change surgeries. Some days it seems like it’s really hard to find good friends who believe in what we are doing and who are willing to stand with us. **I am so grateful that you are that kind of friend. 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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