

update letter
OCTOBER 2024



Dear Friends,

On March 8, 1971, undefeated heavyweight boxers Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier stood toe-to-toe in the ring. Around them was a packed house in New York City's Madison Square Garden. The match between two undisputed champions is still remembered today as the "Fight of the Century."

It certainly lived up to its name. The bout was as intense as any fight that you might see in a movie. Both men landed hundreds of punches against each other, and the match lasted a full 15 rounds. In the final round, Frazier dealt Ali a devastating left hook that sent Ali to the ground. Ali bounced back up and kept fighting, but by the end the judges unanimously declared Frazier the winner.

A story is told that sometime following the fight, an interviewer asked Ali about the left hook that knocked him down. Ali is said to have thoughtfully replied, "Frazier's left hook wasn't the punch that knocked me down. It was all the punches he hit me with in the 14 rounds before that did it."

Just like the old saying about "the straw that broke the camel's back," Ali understood that one punch alone doesn't usually knock a fighter down. More often than not, it's all the punches combined that wear him out. I think about that principle, sometimes, in the work that we've been called to do.

It's been two years since the U.S. Supreme Court reversed its *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision. From 1973 to 2022, abortion took a lot of "punches" from pro-lifers. State pro-life legislation led to lawsuits that slowly eroded abortion. Pregnancy resource centers, adoption agencies, and similar charities gave women actual options besides abortion. A friend of mine once said that the key to ending abortion was to make sure people never stopped talking about it. Pro-lifers have done their best to do exactly that: Keep talking about abortion and the harm that it does to women and unborn children.

Many people don't realize the *Dobbs* decision was the result of a lawsuit over Mississippi's 15-week abortion ban. When Mississippi first passed that law, a lot of pro-lifers did not believe a 15-week abortion ban would do any good. Like a left hook, the *Dobbs* decision over the law seemed like a "knockout," but that one ruling was not the lone punch that knocked *Roe v. Wade* down. It was the hundreds of punches that pro-lifers across the country threw in the 49 years before that did it.

The same thing happened with the abortion amendment this year: The Arkansas Supreme Court's ruling against the measure's sponsors was an important "punch," but it might not have been effective without all of the other "punches" that pro-lifers threw against that amendment this year. You can read more about that in this letter.

Evil rarely is defeated with one fell swoop. It usually requires relentless work from lots of people who are committed to standing for what is right. That is what Family Council is here to do: Stand relentlessly for what is good. Keep reading to find out how Family Council has been working to do that—and how you can as well.

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inside:

Here's How Pro-Life Efforts Helped Thwart the Arkansas Abortion Amendment

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Executive Director Jerry Cox

My Thoughts: Here's How Pro-Life Efforts Helped Thwart the Arkansas Abortion Amendment

By Jerry Cox, Executive Director

On August 22 the Arkansas Supreme Court blocked the Arkansas Abortion Amendment of 2024 from appearing on the November ballot. The decision came after the court determined the measure's sponsors, Arkansans for Limited Government, failed to comply with state law governing the use of paid petition canvassers. **However, the measure might have moved forward in spite of the court ruling had it not been for pro-life efforts against the abortion amendment. Here's why:**

It takes 90,704 valid petition signatures from registered voters to place a measure on the ballot in Arkansas. Arkansans for Limited Government used hundreds of volunteers and hundreds of paid petition canvassers to gather signatures in support of the amendment. The Arkansas Supreme Court rejected the petitions collected by paid-canvassers, but accepted the petitions collected by volunteers.

By law, when a ballot initiative's sponsor submits petition signatures to the Secretary of State, the sponsor also must file a sworn statement confirming that each paid-canvasser was employed in accordance with state law. Arkansans for Limited Government failed to file this affidavit. Because the sponsors failed to comply with state law, Secretary of State John Thurston rejected all of the petitions for the abortion amendment. That prompted Arkansans for Limited Government to file a lawsuit.

The supreme court agreed that Arkansans for Limited Government failed to comply with state law and that the Secretary of State was right to disqualify the petition signatures gathered by paid-canvassers. However, the court said the Secretary of State was wrong to reject the signatures collected by volunteers. That means the signatures that the volunteers collected were eligible to be counted.

Arkansans for Limited Government's volunteers collected 87,675 signatures—which is short of the 90,704 required to qualify for the ballot. The Arkansas Supreme Court said the Secretary of State was wrong to disqualify these signatures. That means if the group's volunteers gathered 3,000 more signatures, their abortion amendment might have advanced to the next step of the certification process.

Pro-abortion volunteers did not collect enough signatures to reach the ballot, because pro-lifers in Arkansas have worked for months to oppose the abortion amendment. The "Decline to Sign" campaigns led by Arkansas Right to Life and Family Council Action Committee empowered people to stand for life in every county across the state. Northwest Arkansas was "Ground Zero" for the abortion campaign, and the pro-lifers there worked every weekend to make sure voters understood just how extreme this abortion amendment was. Without those efforts, the volunteers working for the abortion amendment might have garnered enough support to move forward in spite of the state supreme court's decision.

A lot of people have said they would have liked to see pro-lifers soundly defeat this abortion amendment at the ballot box in November. I understand, but the Arkansas Abortion Amendment was such a misleading and flawed measure that it really had no business being on the ballot in the first place. Defeating this extreme amendment means Arkansas' women and unborn children will continue to be protected from abortion. That's something pro-lifers should be proud of.

Family Council Participates in Pro-Life Press Conference in Southeast Kansas

On September 10, Family Council joined members of Operation Rescue and Students for Life at a press conference outside a new regional abortion facility in Pittsburg, Kansas. Earlier this year, Planned Parenthood Great Plains—the regional affiliate responsible for Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Arkansas—announced it intended to place an abortion facility in Pittsburg, Kansas—near the state lines with Missouri and Oklahoma. In August, Family Council

obtained documents revealing the location of Planned Parenthood's new regional abortion facility. Since then, Family Council has been in communication with pro-life groups in Kansas to discuss how pro-lifers can oppose Planned Parenthood's abortion agenda.

Operation Rescue organized the joint press conference outside the new abortion facility, and Family Council Assis-

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Family Council Participates in Pro-Life Press Conference in Southeast Kansas *(continued)*

tant Director David Cox spoke on behalf of Family Council, telling the media,

We believe every innocent, human life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death. Abortion hurts women and families, and it takes the lives of innocent unborn children. That is why we oppose Planned Parenthood's pro-abortion agenda.

Pro-lifers in Arkansas are committed to ending abortion by passing pro-life legislation and by supporting women and families. Since 2022, the State of Arkansas' Pregnancy Resource Center Grant program has distributed \$2 million in funding to organizations that provide material support to women with unplanned pregnancies. This year, Family Council, Arkansas Right to Life, and other organizations worked with the Arkansas Legislature and Governor Sarah Sanders to enact a \$2 million appropriation that will support maternal health and fund local pregnancy help organizations across Arkansas.

Planned Parenthood has criticized this highly successful grant program, and Planned Parenthood's decision to open this Pittsburg abortion facility shows its goal is to perform abortions on women throughout the Four State Area. Arkansas, Oklahoma,

and Missouri all have passed good, pro-life laws protecting women and unborn children from abortion. This facility will promote abortion to women from these states.

We believe women and families deserve better, and we are urging citizens not to support Planned Parenthood's pro-abortion agenda.

Family Council is committed to working with as many of our friends as possible in Arkansas and across the country to end abortion. We are glad to support pro-life efforts in Kansas, and we hope to continue working with different groups there in the coming months.



Right: Planned Parenthood's new abortion facility in Southeast Kansas, approximately 90 minutes from Northwest Arkansas.



Assistant Director David Cox

Policy Points: President Trump is Not "to Blame" for States Protecting Women, Unborn Children from Abortion

By David Cox, Assistant Director

On September 4, Planned Parenthood Action issued a statement saying Donald Trump "is to blame for 22 state abortion bans" in America. On September 10, the pro-abortion group doubled-down, calling him "the man who caused our current abortion access crisis." Obviously, as the nation's largest abortion provider, Planned Parenthood is no friend of former President Trump, and the organization's political arm is working overtime to campaign against him. But statements like these show ignorance about what the pro-life movement has done for the past 40 years. Donald Trump is not the sole reason states protect women and unborn children from abortion. Pro-life organizations and legislators are.

As President of the United States, Donald Trump nominated U.S. Supreme Court Justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett, and their support for the 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson*

Women's Health decision was essential in overturning *Roe v. Wade*. But what groups like Planned Parenthood fail to acknowledge is that most of the states that have prohibited abortion were enacting pro-life laws long before the reversal of *Roe*.

After the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Roe* in 1973, pro-lifers went to work on whatever pro-life legislation they could. Progress was slow, but in 1988 Pennsylvania passed a pro-life law that Planned Parenthood challenged in court. That case made it to the U.S. Supreme Court, and led to the *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision. At the time, there were Repub-

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Policy Points: President Trump is Not “to Blame” for States Protecting Women, Unborn Children from Abortion *(continued)*

lican-appointed justices on the court, and pro-lifers hoped the court would reverse *Roe*. Obviously, that did not happen, but the court did undermine part of *Roe* by making it clear that lawmakers had leeway to restrict and prohibit abortion in certain situations. So that’s what pro-lifers started doing—hoping that along the way we would save babies and keep undermining *Roe v. Wade* a little at a time.

On April 28, 1990, Dr. James Dobson spoke to an estimated 700,000 pro-lifers gathered in Washington, D.C. for the Rally for Life. During his remarks, Dr. Dobson talked about how important it was for pro-lifers to stay engaged on judicial nominations, saying, “Someday when you awaken in the morning and you get your newspaper, the headlines will show that there is a new Supreme Court vacancy. Be ready for that moment!” At the time, Donald Trump was a New York real estate mogul, and most people did not imagine he would ever run for office—much less nominate a federal judge to fill a vacancy on the supreme court!

Obviously, as president, Donald Trump deserves credit for nominating good judges, and the U.S. Senate deserves credit for confirming those nominations. Likewise, Justices Alito, Thomas, Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Barrett all deserve credit for reversing *Roe*. But pro-life leaders deserve credit for believing that *Roe* could be overturned. And pro-life citizens and pro-life lawmakers deserve credit for spending decades passing pro-life laws that led to the reversal of *Roe*. Had it not been for their willingness to stand for life, states like Arkansas probably would not be protecting women and unborn children from abortion today.

ACLU of Arkansas Supports Pro-Abortion Rule in Federal Court

On September 3 the ACLU of Arkansas announced it is leading a coalition of pro-abortion groups supporting a new Biden Administration rule in federal court. In April, Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin led a 17-state coalition challenging the Biden Administration’s new rule requiring employers to accommodate abortions under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) of 2022. The PWFA is a federal law that helps ensure pregnant workers receive accommodations from their employers to protect them and their unborn children. However, the Biden Administration has hijacked the law to justify federal rules that support abortion.

The Biden Administration’s new pro-abortion rules threaten business owners with lawsuits if they do not accommodate employees’ abortions—even if the abortions would be illegal under state law. A.G. Griffin’s lawsuit over the

rules is still playing out in federal court. However, the ACLU of Arkansas is co-leading an amicus brief supporting the Biden Administration’s pro-abortion position.

It’s worth pointing out that the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act is a bipartisan law that was supported by a broad coalition of organizations, including pro-life groups. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said the law would advance its “goal of ensuring that no woman ever feels forced to choose between her future and the life of her child while protecting the conscience rights and religious freedoms of employers.” However, the Biden Administration is twisting this law to promote abortion. We believe federal courts ultimately will recognize what the Biden Administration is doing and block this pro-abortion reinterpretation of federal law.

Wherever Marijuana is Legal, Chinese Organized Crime Dominates Black Market

News outlets report Chinese organized crime is dominating black market marijuana in states where marijuana is legal. In September, NBC’s KNTV reported the City of Antioch, California, is one of the largest concentrations of illegal marijuana grow operations in the state—and authorities say nearly all of them are “run by Chinese organized crime.” CNN writes that “illegal pot production in Antioch provides a glimpse of a hidden world—one that mirrors a trend playing out not only in California, but in states such

as Oklahoma, Oregon, New Mexico and Maine: groups of people with apparent ties to foreign countries—most notably China—producing weed in colossal volumes.”

Unfortunately, this is a story that states have seen play out time and again: Instead of weakening the black market, legalization of marijuana has actually emboldened drug cartels and made the problem worse. A CBS News segment last year highlighted how Chinese investment is driving illegal marijuana production across the

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Wherever Marijuana is Legal, Chinese Organized Crime Dominates Black Market *(continued)*

U.S. CBN reported last October that Chinese investors with “suitcases full of cash” were buying U.S. farmland in Oklahoma and elsewhere to grow black market marijuana.



Illegal marijuana operations sometimes are tied to illegal immigration and international labor trafficking. Earlier this summer, NPR reported how immigrants from China were illegally crossing America’s southern border, saying that many were taking jobs at illicit marijuana farms springing up across the U.S. In March NBC’s affiliate WCSH in Maine reported how Chinese nationals allegedly were abducted and forced to work at black market marijuana operations against their will.

These reports should raise serious concerns for Arkansas. Right now the group Arkansans for Patient Access is working to pass Issue 3, an amendment drastically expanding marijuana in the state. Under this measure, marijuana users would no longer need to show they suffer from a specific medical condition listed in state law—making it easier to use marijuana recreationally. The amendment would give free marijuana cards to immigrants and out-of-state residents who come to Arkansas to use marijuana. The amendment would guarantee marijuana growers and sellers a monopoly over the state’s marijuana industry. The measure also fails to limit the amount of THC in marijuana products, and it repeals restrictions designed to protect children from marijuana advertising. All of this would lead to more marijuana in Arkansas.

Family Council Action Committee has materials available for volunteers and churches regarding the marijuana amendment. You can learn more at FamilyCouncilActionCommittee.com.

Arkansas Authorities Continue Intercepting Illegal Marijuana from Out of State

Interstate-40 through Arkansas continues to be a major drug pipeline for illicit marijuana across the country, and authorities in Arkansas routinely intercept large quantities of illegal drugs from out of state. On September 9, Arkansas State Police seized 514 pounds of illegal marijuana and two pounds of psychedelic mushrooms during a routine traffic stop. According to a press release, the driver was from Texas, and he told police he was traveling from California to New Jersey. On August 29, Arkansas State Police announced the arrest of a California man transporting 105 pounds of illegal, high-grade marijuana on I-40. On July 31, state troopers stopped a 2024 White Nissan Altima carrying illegal marijuana and Fentanyl near Fort Smith. The driver reportedly was traveling from California to Tennessee. A few days before that, troopers seized 347 pounds of illegal marijuana in two Franklin County traffic stops on I-40. The list goes on and on.

These drugs appear to be coming from states where marijuana is legal. This simply further shows how marijuana’s legalization has actually emboldened the drug cartels and made the black market worse. These illegal drugs hurt our citizens and provide funding for other illegal activities that drug cartels carry out. We are grateful for the Arkansas State Police and other authorities who are pushing back against these criminal organizations and working to keep illegal drugs out of our communities.

Right: 514 pounds of illegal marijuana state troopers seized during a routine traffic stop on September 9. Drug interceptions like this one have become all too common in Arkansas.



WSJ Highlights Election Misinformation on Chinese-Owned TikTok

A September report in *The Wall Street Journal* highlighted election misinformation on social media. The article showed how social media giant TikTok let accounts linked to the Chinese government spread misleading content targeting U.S. voters ahead of the 2024 election. TikTok boasts approximately one billion users worldwide—including 135 million or more in the U.S.—making it one of the most popular social media platforms on earth. However, TikTok and its Chinese-based parent company ByteDance, have come under fire for serving kids a steady “diet of darkness” online and struggling to protect private user data from entities in China, such as the Chinese Communist Party.



The Wall Street Journal report reveals how social media accounts posed as conservative news outlets, sharing videos that mischaracterized elected leaders. Even though TikTok has policies against fake accounts, the article points out that enforcement was slow, allowing misleading content to reach millions of users before being removed. All of this underscores the concerns many have expressed in the past about how TikTok might be used to spread Chinese propaganda.

In 2022, U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security sharing concerns about TikTok’s operations in the U.S., saying in part,

Major U.S. Corporations Backtrack on DEI Policies

On August 28, Yahoo News reported home-improvement giant Lowe’s—one of America’s largest retail chains—had revised its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies amidst growing public pushback. Much like Affirmative Action programs from the 1970s and 1980s, liberals regard DEI policies as a way to correct biases and inequalities in business. The problem is DEI tends to promote divisive ideologies, and it has become a tool the LGBT movement uses to promote gender-identity politics in the workplace. Employees who hold a biblical view of gender risk their jobs.

Lowe’s is the latest major corporation to rethink its support for pro-LGBT initiatives such as DEI policies. In July, John Deere—the world’s largest seller of farm equipment—announced it was moving away from pro-LGBT and pro-DEI activity. In a statement published on X, John Deere

TikTok captures vast amounts of private information on users, including American citizens, and has long been suspected of providing the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] with potential access to that information. This threatens the safety and security of American citizens, and also functions as an avenue for the Chinese government to track the locations of and develop blackmail on Federal employees and contractors.

U.S. Congressman Bruce Westerman wrote last March,

Although TikTok executives claim that it does not share any data collected by the app, there are several Chinese laws in place that provide CCP [Chinese Communist Party] officials access to all user data collected by Chinese-owned tech companies, like TikTok. This means the CCP has access to sensitive data, like the location of every TikTok user worldwide, including the over 210 million Americans who have downloaded the app.

Last year Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin filed two lawsuits against TikTok and its parent company ByteDance. The A.G.’s lawsuits allege that TikTok and ByteDance failed to fully disclose that the company is subject to Chinese laws that mandate cooperation with intelligence activities of the People’s Republic of China and that TikTok aggressively collects sensitive user data, which puts its users at risk.

Social media platforms are more than just websites or phone apps. These are multibillion dollar businesses owned and operated by investors and other interests. If the Chinese Communist Party can influence TikTok, the CCP may be able to manipulate content and influence users on one of the world’s largest social media platforms. That’s a serious concern.

said the company would no longer participate in “social or cultural awareness parades, festivals, or events.” This seems to be directed at pro-LGBT Pride parades and similar performances. Target chose to quietly reduce its Pride-themed merchandise last June following backlash from its customers, and Bud Light is still suffering the effects of boycotts that came in the wake of its 2023 marketing disaster with transgender social media influencer Dylan Mulvaney.

It’s deeply troubling when multimillion dollar corporations use their wealth and influence to promote radical, pro-LGBT ideas, but it’s also encouraging when companies like Lowe’s rethink their positions and change course. As some have said, all of this seems to show America’s “silent majority” is very real when it comes to these issues.

Family Council Team Members Appear on National Program

In August, Family Council President Jerry Cox and Family Council's Assistant Director David Cox each appeared separately on "Washington Watch With Tony Perkins" to discuss different issues in Arkansas. "Washington Watch" is a daily radio show and Internet livestream by our friends at Family Research Council in Washington, D.C. FRC's Tony Perkins discusses current issues from a biblical perspective. The program airs nationwide on the American Family Radio Network, Bott Radio, and various Christian stations.

On August 15, David was invited on the program to discuss Family Council's experience being "de-banked" three years ago. In 2021 our office received a terse email from our credit card processor—a company owned by JPMorgan Chase—saying, "Unfortunately, we can no longer support your business. We wish you all the luck in the future, and hope that you find a processor that better fits your payment processing needs." Within sixty seconds, our account was terminated and Family Council could no longer accept donations online. Unfortunately, other organizations have had similar experiences as well. David was able to share about the growing backlash against politically-motivated "de-banking" in America and how Family Council has drawn attention to the problem.

Right: Jerry Cox appeared on "Washington Watch With Tony Perkins" to discuss the defeat of the Arkansas Abortion Amendment.

On August 26, Jerry was invited on "Washington Watch" to discuss the Arkansas Supreme Court's decision to reject a proposed abortion amendment vying for the November ballot. Jerry was able to talk about the good, pro-life work that's been done in Arkansas, and provide additional details about the court's decision to block the abortion measure.

One of the ways we speak truth in culture is through media interviews. Even though "Washington Watch" is a Christian program, its listeners want to know about the issues affecting our communities, our state, and our nation. We are pleased to be in a position to share good news and honest information with people across Arkansas and around the nation.



Family Council Distributing Thousands of Arkansas Voter's Guides Ahead of Election

Family Council distributed more than 10,000 printed copies of the Arkansas Voter's Guide last month—and we're still working to share as many of them as possible across the state. The Arkansas Voter's Guide is one of the best services we offer to the people of Arkansas. We survey the candidates on a variety of issues, and we publish their survey responses in print and online. We don't endorse any candidates or editorialize about their answers. We let each candidate's answers—or lack thereof—speak for themselves. Our guide helps Arkansans vote wisely when they head to the polls on Election Day.

No other organization offers a voter's guide like this one. If it were up to us, we would send a free copy of the Arkansas Voter's Guide to every registered voter in the state. Unfortunately, we don't have the resources to do that, but we do have free copies of the guide available in print and online. There's still time to request free printed copies of the Arkansas Voter's Guide to pass out at your church or share with your friends and family. You can learn more by calling our office at (501) 375-7000 or visiting our ArkansasVotersGuide.com.

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Here's How You Can Help Us

We're just 90 days away from the end of the year, and this is a critical time for us at Family Council. The 2024 election is here, and the 2025 legislative session is coming right behind it. Around this time each year, I ask our friends and supporters to consider tax-deductible donations between now and December 31. In years past I've been able to say if everyone gives the same as in years past, we will be on solid ground. This year the landscape is different. Our team is larger and our mission has grown. The expansion of our work means we need more support. We've been finding new donors, but we have a ways to go. If you have never given to Family Council before, now would be a great time to start. If you have supported us in the past, I hope you will help us as you are able this year. God has met our needs through you and our other friends across the state, and I am confident He will provide what we need. I do pray that you will be led to help us.

Thank you for standing with us. It's so good to have friends like you who believe in the mission that we have been called to do. **Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if there is ever anything my staff or I can do for you.**

Sincerely,

Thank you!!

Jerry Cox, President

P.S. There's so much going on that I don't have room to tell you about right now. We are building a network of 1,000 churches that will partner with Governor Sanders' Faith Based Initiatives office to address drug addiction, fatherless homes, violence, and other problems. Our attorney, Stephanie Nichols, is writing laws and reviewing possible legislation. She also is forming a team of Christian attorneys who will bring their legal expertise to bear at the capitol and in court in Arkansas. Together we've won great victories, and together we will keep standing and keep winning. **Thank you for your friendship and 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.
