



Arkansas CITIZEN

JANUARY 2025



Dear Friends,

If you are like me, you watch the weather a lot more when snow is in the forecast. When I was a boy over 60 years ago, weather forecasting was not as reliable as today, and back then you would have to wait for the forecast to come on the radio or TV. If you missed it, the weather could surprise you. Remember how you felt when you were about eight-years-old and people started talking about the possibility of snow. Even more exciting—remember how those surprise snow storms felt when you went to bed one night and woke up to a world of white snow!

One cold, winter morning while it was still dark, my mother woke me up and said, “Come, look outside.” I ran to the door as she opened it. Outside I could see the most beautiful half-foot of snow I had ever seen. For an eight-year-old, it may as well have been Christmas. Forget about breakfast—no school today—where are my boots?

There’s just something about the fresh, pure snow that makes everything new. Even footprints seem to taint it a bit. Then, there’s the quiet. There’s no quiet like “snow quiet.” Muffled sounds—no traffic on the road—maybe a lone bird making a lonesome cry. Even thinking seems a little more clear. That old, brown patch of grass, the oak tree, and the dilapidated barn looked like a Currier and Ives painting. Even though cows didn’t appreciate it, they still looked better in the snow. We had lots of huge cedar trees around our house. Under their load of heavy snow, they reminded me so much of Christmas. The day was “magic.”

You even find snow in the Bible. In Isaiah 1:18 it says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be wool.” While snow just covers up the dull, brown ground and soon melts away, God’s forgiveness remains. It makes all things new. It makes us “as white as snow” on the inside.

The recent election reminds me of that surprise snow. People went to sleep on November 5th and woke up on the 6th to something new. No politician is going to save us, but I wonder if this election is signaling something spiritual—something in the hearts of people that goes way beyond any political office. Could this be a time of repentance and redemption for our nation? Wouldn’t it be amazing if God’s people who are called by His name would humble themselves and pray? Wouldn’t it be amazing if God’s grace and forgiveness were to blanket us as a surprise snowfall in the night and our nation rise to a new, more godly place? I believe it can happen.

At Family Council, our mission is to keep promoting the good and standing against the bad. Sometimes we’re a bit like a conscience. We’re here to remind lawmakers and everyone else that there’s a better way—a path that turns Arkansas toward home—toward the light—toward God’s truth.

I know you share my hope that one day we will look out and see that our work—our sacrifice—our faithfulness and our obedience to God have ushered in a new day when God reigns in the hearts of men, and though their sins and the sins of our nation be as scarlet, that they become as white as snow. Thank you for standing with us.



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Executive Director Jerry Cox

My Thoughts: Setting Legislative Priorities for the Nineteenth Time

By Jerry Cox, Executive Director

It's hard for me to believe, but this year will mark my nineteenth legislative session as a lobbyist at the Arkansas Capitol. When I first started lobbying some 36 years ago, there were legislators who had served in office longer than I had been alive. Now I've been at the capitol longer than many lawmakers have been alive. I often joke that some of the biggest changes to the legislative process came when two very influential lawmakers left Little Rock: One went to Congress. The other went to prison. I'm not sure which is worse.

When Arkansas' 77th General Assembly convened in 1989, I went to the capitol with a single pro-life bill I wanted to pass. The 95th General Assembly will convene on January 13—and my team and I plan to be there, working on more than a dozen legislative priorities. Here are a few of our goals:

- **Abortion and Marijuana Amendments:** Fix Arkansas' flawed petition initiative laws that enable the wealthy abortion and marijuana industries to pay people to circulate petitions for state constitutional amendments that deceive people. If they have their way, they will keep pushing amendments that will lead to the deaths of innocent unborn children and create more marijuana drug addicts. We and others successfully fought these efforts in 2024. If the laws aren't fixed, we can expect these powerful forces to try to put their dangerous amendments on the ballot every two years.
- **Abortion Drugs:** Even though abortion is illegal in Arkansas, abortionists in other states are still illegally shipping these dangerous drugs into Arkansas. We have some ideas for legislation that can stem the flow of abortion-causing drugs into Arkansas.
- **Abortion:** Lawmakers are already planning legislation for the coming legislative session that will weaken Arkansas' good abortion law. Unborn children who are conceived as a result of rape or incest have just as much right

to live as any others. Unborn children who may be born less than perfect have as much right to be born as anyone else. We won't stand by and let them destroy everything it took to make Arkansas the most pro-life state in the nation.

- **Homeschooling:** Anti-homeschool lawmakers are already planning legislation for the coming legislative session that discriminates against homeschoolers by taking LEARNS Act funding away. Homeschoolers are currently eligible for these State funds and we intend to work to see them treated fairly.
- **Pregnancy Center Funding:** The State of Arkansas currently provides \$2 million per year in funding to help about 50 pregnancy centers across the state. These tax-funded grants help pregnancy centers provide pregnant women and girls with alternatives to abortion. We plan to work with Governor Sanders and lawmakers to keep this funding going.
- **Parental Rights and Religious Freedom:** We have several bills ready for introduction that will strengthen parental rights to keep schools from secretly guiding students into the gay or transgender lifestyle without telling the parents. We have other bills that will strengthen the rights of churches, pastors, and businesses who refuse to participate in weddings or other activities that violate their religious beliefs.
- **Online Safety for Kids:** We are working with lawmakers on several bills that will require age identification and/or parental consent for minors to access social media and other online material.
- **Follow Our Legislative Agenda at [FamilyCouncil.org](https://www.familycouncil.org):** Space does not permit the listing of Family Council's entire legislative agenda, and we will add bills once the session is underway in January. You can follow us online and help by contacting your lawmaker about key legislation.



Photo by Daniel Schwen, accessed on Wikimedia Commons



Dr. Jim Lagrone, D. Min, Church Ambassador Network Director

A New Year

By Dr. Jim Lagrone, D. Min, Church Ambassador Network Director

Jean Marzollo wrote a poem which contained the phrase, “In fourteen hundred ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue.” Of course, it is about Christopher Columbus and his journey to the Americas.

As a self-educated explorer, Columbus had to raise funds and hire a crew for the voyage. His goal was simple and was designed to open trade routes and

increase his personal wealth—and maybe a little desire for fame was involved. Unfortunately, in our lifetime, he is not seen as an explorer, but focus has now turned to what happened to the lands he “put on the map.” But it cannot be argued that Columbus did something new that changed the world. It was, simply said, a very big deal.

The Church Ambassador Network does not compare with Columbus, but it is a very big deal. The Network works with churches and government officials to improve the life of families and communities across the state. It does not lobby. But it does allow churches a different pathway to work

together and build relationships to represent our faith and impact our culture.

We began in 2024 with a vision led by Jerry Cox and Family Council to do something different and connect with churches in a greater way. We started with zero churches and zero government officials. Now we are growing at a healthy pace. We are building bridges across our state government. We are going to bring pastors into the capital several days during the upcoming legislative session. We have been able to involve churches which have not traditionally been involved with government. Why? Because they see the possibility of something different happening. They see the possibility of making a difference in families and communities without the division that always seems to come when politics are involved.

God really blessed our work this year with the addition of Cade Daniel. His skill and dedication are making a big difference as we expand our network. 2025 will be a year of great challenges. Maybe I need to write a poem to rhyme with 2025. We will jive in 2025. We will thrive in 2025. We will strive in 2025. Regardless, I am confident the new year will be the greatest year so far for the Church Ambassador Network.

Corporate America Walking Away From Pro-LGBT Policies

In November, news outlets reported that Walmart had become the latest company to roll back pro-LGBT “diversity, equity, and inclusion” policies in the face of public backlash. The Associated Press noted that the retail giant also would stop participating in the Human Rights Campaign’s “Corporate Equality Index” that rates how pro-LGBT different corporations are. Walmart has participated in that index for years and has used its corporate wealth and influence to promote LGBT ideology for the better part of the past decade—so it’s difficult to overstate how significant this change is.

Walmart is not the only major corporation to move away from radical DEI and pro-LGBT policies. Newsweek reports Toyota has announced that it will withdraw from HRC’s corporate equality index along with other DEI measurements. Last year Target quietly reduced its LGBT Pride-themed merchandise as a result of backlash from its customers. Home-improvement giant Lowe’s recently revised its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies amidst growing pushback from consumers, and in July, John Deere—the world’s largest seller of farm equipment—announced it was moving away from pro-LGBT and pro-DEI activity as well.

Many companies established DEI goals a few years ago to create an equal playing field for racial and ethnic minorities, but it did not take long for LGBT groups to hijack those corporate programs. For some activist groups, companies like Walmart or Lowe’s could never be pro-LGBT enough. At the same time, customers clearly do not want

It’s encouraging when companies like Walmart rethink their positions and change course. We hope many more companies will follow Walmart’s lead this year.

retailers and hardware stores force-feeding them LGBT ideology every time they shop. 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 Walmart rethink their positions and change course. We hope many more companies will follow Walmart’s lead this year.

Supreme Court Case Could Decide Future of Arkansas' SAFE Act

A case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court could decide the future of Arkansas' SAFE Act. The Save Adolescents From Experimentation—or SAFE—Act is a 2021 law that protects children in Arkansas from sex-change procedures, puberty-blockers, and cross-sex hormones. The law passed with overwhelming support in the Arkansas Legislature, but it has been blocked in federal court for more than three years. To date, roughly half the states in America have passed laws similar to the SAFE Act—including Ohio, Wyoming, Tennessee, and many others.

The Biden Administration has gone to court to stop Tennessee's law protecting children from sex-change surgeries, and that case has worked its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. On December 4, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the lawsuit, where CNN reports the justices "ex-

pressed deep skepticism" about the Biden Administration's arguments against the law. If the U.S. Supreme Court upholds Tennessee's law, it could pave the way for federal courts to uphold Arkansas' SAFE Act and the similar laws that other states have passed.

Sex-change procedures, puberty blockers, and cross-sex hormones can leave children scarred, sterilized, and at risk of serious health conditions. Doctors do not know all of the long term effects that puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones might have on people, but there's plenty of evidence these procedures can lead to lasting regret and complications—some of which may even be life-threatening.

Since 2021, a major hospital in Sweden has announced that it would no longer give puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to kids, the U.K. has adopted policies that protect children from puberty blockers, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has added a warning label to puberty blockers after discovering they caused some biological girls to experience swelling in the brain.

It may be several months before the U.S. Supreme Court issues a decision over Tennessee's law, but we trust that our federal courts ultimately will recognize that the SAFE Act and the many laws like it are constitutional and let states protect children from sex-change procedures.

Left: Family Council President Jerry Cox visits with Capitol Police following passage of the SAFE Act in the Senate Public Health committee on March 22, 2021. As a precaution, officers helped Family Council staff avoid pro-LGBT protesters cursing and hurling obscenities at people who supported the SAFE Act.



NPR Showcases How Planned Parenthood is Performing Abortions on Women From Arkansas

In December NPR reported how Planned Parenthood's new facility in Kansas is marketing abortion to women from Arkansas. Planned Parenthood is the nation's largest abortion-provider, and the organization owns facilities in Little Rock and Rogers. However, Arkansas' good, pro-life laws generally prevent those facilities from performing abor-

tions. But over the summer Family Council learned Planned Parenthood had secretly acquired a facility in Pittsburg, Kansas—a town of some 20,000 residents—within driving distance of Northwest Arkansas.

The new location in Southeast Kansas opened in August. At the time, Family Council and others expressed concerns that the facility would make it easier for Planned Parenthood to promote abortions regionally to women in states that all have very strong, pro-life laws. Now NPR is reporting how Planned Parenthood is using its newest facility to perform abortions on women from Arkansas writing, "Among the approximately 150 patients who secure abor-

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Left: Planned Parenthood's new abortion facility in Southeast Kansas, approximately 90 minutes from Northwest Arkansas. Family Council discovered the abortion giant secretly acquired the facility earlier this year.



NPR Showcases How Planned Parenthood is Performing Abortions on Women From Arkansas *(continued)*

tion appointments [at the Pittsburg abortion facility] each month, Kansans and Missourians make up less than a fifth combined. The vast majority come from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas.”

Abortion hurts women, and it ends the lives of unborn children. Its risks and its consequences are deathly serious. Planned Parenthood’s decision to operate this new, regional abortion facility shows its goal is to perform abortions on women throughout Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Texas. We believe women and families deserve better than abortion. It’s important to prohibit abortion through legislation, but we need to work to eliminate the demand for abortion as well.

One way Arkansans can do that is by supporting pro-life organizations that empower women with real options besides abortion. Arkansas is home to more than 60 organizations that assist pregnant women—including some 45 pregnancy resource centers that help women with unplanned pregnancies. The State of Arkansas recently vot-

ed to award \$2 million in grants to pregnancy-help organizations for the 2024–2025 budget cycle. That money is going to help a lot of women and children in the coming months—and hopefully, it will encourage women not to

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travel to states like Kansas for abortions. We look forward to working with our friends in the Arkansas Legislature to renew this pro-life funding in the coming session.



Assistant Director David Cox

Policy Points: Democratic Caucus Rallies Around Anti-Life Legislation

By David Cox, Assistant Director

Lawmakers were able to begin filing legislation in November, and it did not take long for some legislators to begin rallying around bad bills. The Arkansas Democratic House Caucus already is promoting a slate of bad legislation as part of its “2025 Better Arkansas Agenda.” The caucus is made up of Democratic legislators serving in the Arkansas House of Representatives. On November 26 the caucus held a press conference unveiling its legislative package for 2025, which includes three bad bills that violate the sanctity and dignity of human life: H.B. 1011, H.B. 1013, and H.B. 1014.

H.B. 1011 is the “Restore Roe Act” by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock). This bad bill would repeal Arkansas’ pro-life laws and legalize abortion throughout the state. The bill itself is 128 pages long, and it goes to great lengths to strike virtually every pro-life provision in the Arkansas code.

H.B. 1013 by Rep. Collins is a bad bill that would let fertility clinics in Arkansas create and kill human embryos as part of unethical in vitro fertilization—or IVF—practices, and H.B. 1014 by Rep. Collins would require the State and Public School Life and Health Insurance Program to pay for these IVF practices. Many couples who struggle with infertility turn to IVF and other fertility treatments for options, but IVF labs in America often operate almost as if human embryos were a factory product that lab workers can create, implant, freeze, or kill at will. People are not products. There are ethical fertility treatments out there—including ethical approaches to IVF—but H.B. 1013 and H.B. 1014 would give legal protection to unethical IVF practices and force the State of Arkansas to pay for these unethical practices through the state’s insurance program. **Unethical IVF practices will not improve maternal health in Arkansas. And abortion hurts women and takes the lives of unborn children. Laws like these simply will not make Arkansas “better” in 2025.**

Allowing Abortion in Cases of Rape and Incest Hurts Women and Unborn Children

This year, Family Council anticipates that some Republican lawmakers may join with pro-abortion Democrats who want to legalize abortion in cases of rape or incest or to protect the health of the woman. All of these exceptions would be bad for Arkansas. In other states, liberal judges have interpreted health exceptions for abortion very broadly—meaning abortion often is permitted for practically any reason at all. But many people do not appreciate how legalizing abortion in cases of rape or incest actually would hurt women and unborn children.

Rape and incest are horrific crimes, and the perpetrators of these crimes need to be punished. A woman who is raped is a victim in every sense of the word, and public health officials have reported in the past that approximately 2%–5% of all abortions are performed because of rape or incest. In light of that, it's easy for some elected officials to justify abortion in these situations. We all wish we could take away the pain that victims of sexual assault experience, but there are serious problems with permitting abortion in cases of rape or incest. Below are five points to consider.

1. Abortion Does Absolutely Nothing to Prevent Rape or Incest. Despite its liberal state abortion laws, California saw its number of rape cases increase from 13,439 in 2020 to 14,435 in 2021. Legalizing abortion in cases of rape or incest does not protect women from sexual predators. It doesn't help law enforcement arrest rapists. It doesn't make it easier for prosecutors, judges, or juries to convict a man who rapes a woman.



2. Abortion Actually Helps Conceal Rape and Incest From Authorities. In 2016 abortionist Ulrich Klopfer admitted to the Indiana Medical Licensing Board that he once performed an abortion on a 10-year-old girl from Illinois who had been raped by her uncle. Dr. Klopfer openly admitted that he did not report the crime to law enforcement. He let the girl go home to her parents who knew about the rape and had decided not to press charges. As far as anyone can tell, that girl's uncle was never brought to justice. Indiana's Medical Licensing Board was shocked to hear Dr. Klopfer speak so openly and so indifferently about what had been done to this girl. Abortion helps conceal evil crimes like this one.

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3. Abortion Does Not Heal the Harm That Rape and Incest Cause. Rape and incest cause lifelong trauma, but abortion doesn't heal the wounds that rape or incest leave behind. Abortion takes the life of an unborn baby, and it carries serious risks for the woman. Abortion is not a quick fix. Its consequences are very serious.

4. Rapists Have No Legal Claim to Their Victims or Their Victims' Children. Under Arkansas law, a rapist has no legal claim to his victim or the children of his victim. That means a woman or girl who becomes pregnant because of rape can keep the child or put the child up for adoption, but she does not have to consult the rapist or share custody with him. Arkansas law is very clear on that point. State courts also are free to take other appropriate action to protect victims of rape or incest.

5. The Unborn Baby is Totally Innocent. An unborn boy or girl has no control over how he or she was conceived. These are living human beings. Rape and incest are evil, and the woman who is raped is an innocent victim in every sense of the word. But the unborn child is innocent as well. Is it right to kill an unborn baby because the baby's father was a rapist?

Here is a List of Legislation We Are Watching in Little Rock as of December 10

Bad Bills Filed

H.B. 1011 (Abortion): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would repeal virtually all of Arkansas’ pro-life laws, and it would legalize abortion throughout the state.

H.B. 1013 (Bioethics): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) governs fertility treatments in Arkansas. The bill would let fertility labs in Arkansas create, freeze, store, and kill human embryos as part of unethical in vitro fertilization—or IVF—practices. Human beings are not lab material. This bad bill fails to respect every unborn child’s right to life.

H.B. 1014 (Bioethics): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would require the State and Public School Life and Health Insurance Program to pay for unethical IVF practices.

H.B. 1020 (School Choice): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would repeal the 2023 LEARNS Act’s education freedom account program that lets students use public funds to pay for an education at a private school or at home.

H.B. 1028 (Libraries): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would repeal Arkansas’ laws that protect children from harmful sexual material. It also would let libraries lend or share obscene material, and it requires public libraries to have “a written policy prohibiting the practice of banning books or other materials because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval” in order to receive public funding.

H.B. 1031 (Sex Education): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would make it possible for the Arkansas Department of Education to implement Planned Parenthood-style sex education as part of larger changes to public school health curriculum.

H.B. 1032 (LGBT): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would prevent healthcare professionals from helping people overcome unwanted same-sex attraction or gender confusion. The way the bill is written, H.B. 1032 would let counselors, doctors, and other healthcare professionals encourage people to be LGBT, but healthcare professionals would not be able to help people overcome unwanted same-sex attraction or accept their biological sex.

H.B. 1033 (Red Flag Law): This bad bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would create a “red flag” law in Arkansas making it easier for authorities to confiscate firearms from citizens that the government deem a danger to themselves or others.

Other Bills We are Watching

H.B. 1018 (Family and Medical Leave): This bill by Rep. Andrew Collins (D – Little Rock) would create an income tax credit for employers who provide paid family and medical leave, such as maternity leave, to employees. Family Council has no position on this bill.

H.B. 1032 would prevent healthcare professionals from helping people overcome unwanted same-sex attraction or gender confusion.

H.B. 1044 (Raffles): This bill by Rep. R. J. Hawk (R – Bryant) and Sen. Jonathan Dismang (R – Little Rock) amends Arkansas’ charitable raffles and bingo laws. The bill would let colleges and universities conduct raffles in-person or online during sporting events. Schools would be able to sell raffle tickets themselves or use a nonprofit charity affiliated with the school to conduct the raffle. The bill contains a provision preventing casinos from operating or administering a raffle on a school’s behalf. Schools could use raffle proceeds to benefit school athletic programs—including purchasing and maintaining athletic facilities or providing financial aid, scholarships, stipends, and other compensation to student-athletes. Family Council has no position on this bill.





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Please Help Us, If You Are Able

As we start a new year, I hope you will help support our work, if you are able. Your generous, tax-deductible gift to Family Council will empower us to make a real difference in Arkansas this year. I often say that when you give to us, it's like putting fuel in the gas tank—it helps us get where we need to go.

This year, we expect a few Republicans to join forces with Democrats who want to weaken Arkansas' good, pro-life laws. We believe there will be an attempt to deny public funds to homeschoolers who qualify under Arkansas' LEARNS Act. We also have a long list of legislation we want to support at the capitol.

Besides our work at the legislature, we plan to grow the Arkansas Justice Institute and the Church Ambassador Network. The ARFuture Foundation is helping pregnancy resource centers receive grant money. Our homeschool division, the Education Alliance, is serving tens of thousands of homeschoolers across the state. Family Council reaches thousands of people everyday online through our website, our emails, and our social media presence.

When you support our work, I want you to know that you're doing a lot more than just giving money to an organization. **You're helping us speak the truth in Arkansas, stand up for what is right, equip voters, and make the state a better place to live, work, and raise a family.** Thank you for standing with us. Please call or email me any time. My team and I would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Thank you!!

Jerry Cox, President

P.S. The Arkansas Legislature convenes on January 13, and lawmakers will meet at the capitol for about 90 days. We have a lot we want to accomplish during that time. You can find news from the legislature every day on our website at FamilyCouncil.org.



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.

