



Arkansas CITIZEN

FEBRUARY 2025



Dear Friends,

"I just get up every morning and go out. And I don't let the old man in."

That's what Hollywood legend Clint Eastwood told country music star Toby Keith during a 2018 celebrity golf tournament. The pair were visiting between swings when Eastwood remarked that he would celebrate his 88th birthday by starting a new film project. Keith was so struck by Eastwood's energy that he asked how the actor could keep working so hard after so many decades. Eastwood said the secret was simple: "I just get up every morning and go out. And I don't let the old man in."

Toby Keith liked the line so much that he wrote a song around it. "Don't Let the Old Man In" became an instant hit with country music fans. Keith was known for making a career out of twangy songs about patriotism, alcohol, women, and blue collar work. "Don't Let The Old Man In" was different. The song dealt with deep reflections about aging, persevering, living, and dying. Eastwood liked the song so much that he included it in his 2018 film *The Mule*.

When Toby Keith was diagnosed with cancer in 2021, the song gained a new meaning. After months of treatment and rest, Keith took the stage at the People's Choice Awards on September 28, 2023, to give one of his final performances. Physically, he was no longer the stout, former football player most fans might have been used to seeing. His face was thin, but his voice still rang out strong. Appropriately, he sang, "Don't Let the Old Man In." When he finished, there was hardly a dry eye in the audience or on the stage. A few months later, on February 5, 2024, Toby Keith passed away at the age of 62.

Our staff begins every morning with a devotion and prayer time before we talk about work, and the other day the conversation drifted to the different singers over the years who produced some of their most memorable songs near the ends of their lives. When Johnny Cash's health began to fail, a lot of folks told him he ought to do less and enjoy semi-retirement. Instead he doubled-down by recording songs he had always meant to sing but just never had the time to. In fact, most of Johnny Cash's record albums were released in the final years of his life and even after his death. When Glen Campbell was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he recorded a powerful song about living with dementia. Their music resonated with millions of fans in America and around the world. "Don't Let the Old Man In" is similar. It's a song about not giving up—about carrying on to the very end.

A lot of people—and a lot of organizations—slow down or even quit when they find success or failure. Not Family Council. We've been active in Arkansas for more than 35 years, and we've enjoyed a little failure and a lot of success along the way. It's tempting to think we've done enough and that we ought to just slow down or take things easy, going forward. But we don't plan to do that. As we lobby the Arkansas Legislature, equip voters, stand for families, and promote biblical values, our plan is simple: Get up, go out, and don't let the old man in. I hope you will keep reading this letter to learn more about how we plan to do that.



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Executive Director Jerry Cox

My Thoughts: Arkansas Remains “Life” of the Party for Fifth Year in a Row

By Jerry Cox, Executive Director

In January, Americans United for Life published its annual Life List naming Arkansas the most pro-life state in America for the fifth year in a row. AUL analyzes laws in all 50 states, and ranks how well each state respects the right to life for the unborn, the disabled, the elderly, the terminally ill, and so on. The Life List shows the ways that states like Arkansas do a good job protecting innocent, human life. It also offers suggestions on improvements that states need to make.

AUL made a point to praise Arkansas for offering funding to pro-life pregnancy resource centers. The group also noted ways Arkansas should improve its laws concerning assisted suicide and similar issues. That is something we hope to address with lawmakers over the next few weeks.

Becoming the most pro-life state in America did not happen overnight. It took many years of hard work from a lot of people. More than a decade ago Family Council joined with Arkansas Right to Life and others in setting out to make Arkansas the most pro-life state in America. By working together, we have done that. Keeping Arkansas the most pro-life state will take constant effort. As a pro-life leader, Arkansas has done important work, but we can't stop. There is more to do. We look forward to continuing that work just as we have for more than 30 years.

Arkansas Lawmakers Convene for 95th General Assembly. Here are Bills We're Watching.

On January 13, the Arkansas Legislature convened in Little Rock for the 95th General Assembly. Here is a brief snapshot of legislation we are watching as of January 13:

Good Bills Filed

S.B. 49 (Used Car Tax): This good bill by Sen. Justin Boyd (R – Fort Smith) and Rep. Lee Johnson (R – Greenwood) would eliminate the sales tax on used cars sold for less than \$10,000. Used cars sold for \$10,000–\$15,000 would be taxed at a special rate of 2.875%. All other vehicles would be taxed at the standard rate.

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.

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Here are Bills We're Watching. (continued)

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. 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.

You can learn more about these bills and keep up with news from the Arkansas Legislature by going to FamilyCouncil.org.

Left: Members of the Family Council team have been active at the Arkansas Capitol since the legislature convened on January 13.

With \$650K in Grants, State of Arkansas Puts its Money Where its Moms Are

In January the State of Arkansas announced it had disbursed nearly \$650,000 in publicly funded grants to 26 pro-life pregnancy help organizations this budget cycle.



The grant funding is part of a \$2 million program the Arkansas Legislature approved in 2024 to promote maternal wellness and assist pregnancy resource centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, and other organizations that help women with unplanned pregnancies. The state is expected to distribute an additional \$1.3 million by the end of June.

Since 2022, Family Council has worked closely with elected officials in Arkansas to provide publicly funded grants to qualified, pro-life charities each year. The grants are optional. Pregnancy resource centers are not required to accept public tax dollars if they do not want to. But for those who do receive grant money, the funding helps provide women in Arkansas with real options besides abortion.

Since July 1, 2022, Arkansas has given more than \$2.5 million to pro-life charities. That’s something to celebrate! **Between now and April, Family Council plans to work with state legislators and Gov. Sanders’ office to secure grant money for pregnancy help organizations in the upcoming 2025–2026 budget cycle.**

Kansas Becomes Abortion Destination for Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas

Government reports show nearly eight out of every ten abortions performed in Kansas are on women from out-of-state. After delaying for months, the Kansas Department of Health released its annual abortion statistics just a few days before Christmas, and the statistics are sobering. Abortions increased in the Sunflower State in 2023. During

It's important to pass laws prohibiting abortion, but we need to eliminate the demand for abortion as well.

2023, abortionists in Kansas performed 15,111 abortions on women from other states. A staggering 7,606 women from Texas and 3,283 women from Oklahoma had abortions in Kansas. By comparison, 728 abortions were performed on women from Arkansas. Obviously, that's too many, but it's well behind Texas and Oklahoma.

Abortionists in Kansas seem to be working hard to make the state an abortion destination. Last summer Family Council learned Planned Parenthood had secretly acquired a facility in Pittsburg, Kansas—a town of within driving distance of Northwest Arkansas, as well as parts of Oklahoma

Right: Planned Parenthood's abortion facility in Southeast Kansas, approximately 90 minutes from Northwest Arkansas. The facility primarily targets Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas.

and Texas. During the fall, NPR published a story showcasing how that Planned Parenthood facility is deliberately promoting abortion to women from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

Women and families deserve better than abortion. It's important to pass laws prohibiting abortion, but we need 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. These types of charities can encourage women not to travel to states like Kansas for abortions. By supporting the pro-life work of these charities, Arkansas can make it less likely women will cross state lines for abortion.



Pro-Abortion Talking Points Move From “Healthcare” to Hysteria

Pro-abortion groups around the country are using new language and new talking points: They're now saying that even basic restrictions on abortion procedures and abortion facilities are “extreme” and “dangerous.” That does not bode well for pro-life policymakers looking for common ground with abortion's supporters.

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Arizona is a good example of this shift. In 2022, the Arizona legislature passed a law allowing abortion during the first 15 weeks of pregnancy, but generally restricting abortion after that point. Most abortions occur early in pregnancy,

and official health records from Arizona show abortionists performed 12,888 legal abortions there in 2023. The vast majority of these abortions were on healthy women carrying healthy children.

Even though Arizona's law allowed thousands of elective abortions, that was not good enough for pro-abortion groups. The ACLU of Arizona and others called the law “dangerous,” and campaigned for Arizona voters to enshrine “the fundamental right to abortion” in the state's constitution. Last year they spent millions of dollars on deceptive advertising to pass a measure doing exactly that. After Arizona's abortion amendment passed, the ACLU filed a lawsuit saying, “Since the [15-Week] Ban took effect in 2022, it has had devastating consequences across the state—forcing many Arizonans to carry pregnancies to term and give birth against their will.” **Given how many thousands of unborn children were legally aborted in Arizona despite the state's 15-week law, the ACLU's statement seems dishonest.**

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Pro-Abortion Talking Points Move From “Healthcare” to Hysteria (continued)

Pro-abortion groups are using similar, deceptive language and strategies in other states. In November, Planned Parenthood filed a sweeping lawsuit challenging virtually all of Missouri’s good, pro-life laws—including basic health and safety regulations on abortion. Planned Parenthood’s lawsuit claimed, “If left in place, the [abortion] restrictions will continue to be catastrophic for Missourians. They will either prevent [abortion] care altogether or severely delay or interfere with [abortion] care.” In other words, Planned Parenthood is saying that even basic abortion health and safety regulations are “catastrophic.”

Some lawmakers may be tempted to think Arkansas can add enough exceptions to our pro-life laws to discourage pro-abortion groups from trying to pass an abortion amendment in Arkansas. But that strategy simply has not worked anywhere else in the country. Groups like Planned Parenthood or the ACLU likely won’t be satisfied unless Arkansas writes unrestricted abortion into its state constitution. Anything less than that simply isn’t enough. Lawmakers and voters alike should keep that in mind, going forward.



Assistant Director David Cox

We’re All a Future “Former” Something: A Lesson From the Life of Former President Jimmy Carter

By David Cox, Assistant Director

On December 29, 2024, former President Jimmy Carter passed away at the age of 100. He was laid to rest in Georgia following a state funeral last month. His death—and the media tributes that aired on television in the following days—prompted many conversations about President Carter’s legacy. I’m too young to remember the Carter Administration, but I’ve read and heard plenty over the years about its policy failures. Weakness abroad and at home spawned a national malaise, and paved the way for Republican challenger Ronald Reagan to soundly win the presidency in 1980. For most of my life, President Carter has not been regarded as a particularly outstanding president. But his passing did give me pause for reflection: While President Carter may not have been an effective Leader of the Free World, I believe he was a genuinely good person who loved the Lord and cared about people. That leads me to a couple of thoughts.

First, on the value of character: In his autobiography *An American Life*, President Ronald Reagan spoke very highly of Jimmy Carter, and even went so far as to praise President Carter for negotiating the release of the U.S. hostages in Iran. Reagan disagreed sharply with Carter’s policies, and he defeated Carter in the presidential election. But Reagan respected Carter’s character. That reflects well on Reagan and Carter alike. It reminds me of Proverbs 16:7, which says, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” There is much to be said for godly character.

And second, on the value of leaving a legacy: Jimmy Carter himself acknowledged that he was a far better “former president” than he was president. When I was growing up, it seemed like former President Carter was someone the U.S. called when our citizens were wrongly imprisoned overseas or when we needed a less polarizing figure to broker a peace deal. At home, he championed organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Lions Clubs International. Personally, I always took it with a grain of salt when former President Carter expressed his thoughts on U.S. policy. After all, his own public policy track record was not great. But while most former heads of state spend their waning years getting paid hundreds of dollars a minute to deliver speeches in front of favorable audiences, Jimmy Carter’s years after the White House were largely focused on charity and philanthropy. To that point, his accomplishments as a “former” president arguably were far more significant than his accomplishments as President of the United States.

I often think how every one of us is a future “former” something. Right now, 135 lawmakers are convened in Little Rock, voting on legislation. None of them will hold office forever. Someday each one will become a “former” Arkansas legislator. The same is true in nearly every other career and vocation: There are former actors, former bankers, former deacons, former governors, former property owners, former managers, former Sunday school teachers, former CEOs—the list goes on and on and on. At some point, we all become a “former” something or other. When you and I reach that point, what will our legacy be? That’s a question we might all do well to think about.

YOU CAN DONATE TO SUPPORT ARKANSAS' MONUMENT

To the Unborn

Arkansas is moving forward with construction of its monument to the unborn. In 2023 the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 310 authorizing a memorial to the unborn on the capitol grounds. The monument is meant to honor the children whose lives were lost to abortion in Arkansas from 1973 to 2022. The Capitol Grounds Commission has chosen to move forward with a Living Wall Monument that will commemorate these unborn children. Our friends at Arkansas Right to Life are collecting funds to help pay for the monument. You can donate toward the monument's construction by scanning the QR code next to this article.

Scan this QR code to donate to the pro-life monument.



Facebook, Instagram Finally Admit "Fact-Checkers" are Politically Biased

Last month Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the social media company would stop "fact-checking" on Facebook and Instagram. Meta introduced "fact-checking" several years ago as a way to combat lies and misinformation online. However, "fact-checkers" have been accused of censoring unpopular opinions and squelching free speech. Videos about illegal immigration or stories about the dangers of performing sex-change procedures on children might get deleted by anonymous "fact-checkers" who disagreed with the content. Facebook officials have consistently denied allegations against its "fact-checkers," but last year Zuckerberg wrote a letter to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee admitting that the Biden Administration had "pressured" his teams to censor content related to the COVID-19 pandemic—including "humor and satire." Zuckerberg also told the committee that Facebook blocked stories about Hunter Biden's laptop in 2020, because the FBI told Facebook the stories were part of a Russian disinformation plot. That turned out to be false.

In a video posted on January 7, Zuckerberg said, "We've reached a point where it's just too many mistakes and too much censorship... The fact-checkers have just been too politically biased and have destroyed more trust than they've created." Zuckerberg indicated "fact-checking" would be replaced with a Community Notes system that would let Facebook users flag inappropriate or misleading content rather than letting Facebook employees unilaterally block material. Zuckerberg also said the social media platforms would eliminate restrictions on topics such as immigration and gender "that are just out of touch with mainstream discourse."

It's too early to call this a victory for free speech, but the decision certainly seems like a step in the right direction. Tech giants like Facebook and Instagram are able to promote or suppress free speech with virtually no accountability. In 2021, Facebook temporarily disabled Family Council's advertising account after we posted a video about inappropriate sexual material at the Jonesboro Pub-



Eliminating "fact-checkers" won't bring more accountability to tech giants like Facebook. But it could help promote free speech on one of the world's largest communication platforms. That would be a welcome change.

lic Library. Facebook never admitted precisely why they suspended our account—and we were able to get our account reinstated after a few days—but it's concerning that such a massive platform could silence an organization with virtually no notice and no clear explanation. Eliminating "fact-checkers" won't bring more accountability to tech giants like Facebook. But it could help promote free speech on one of the world's largest communication platforms. That would be a welcome change.



Family Council Joins Amicus Brief Against Chinese-Owned TikTok in Federal Court

At the very end of 2024, Family Council joined an amicus brief in federal court against social media giant TikTok. With approximately a billion users worldwide—including an estimated 135–170 million in the U.S.—TikTok arguably is one of the most popular social media platforms on the planet. Its Chinese-based parent company, ByteDance, has been valued at \$300 billion. All that is to say, TikTok is big business in the U.S. and around the world.

But TikTok has come under fire for struggling to protect private user data from entities in China—including the Chinese Communist Party. As Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin has pointed out, TikTok’s owners are subject to Chinese laws that mandate secret cooperation with intelligence activities of the People’s Republic of China. The platform also has been accused of serving users a steady “diet of darkness” online and of violating U.S. laws intended to protect children.

Last year, former President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan law requiring TikTok to cut ties with China. If it fails to do so, the law would ban TikTok in the United States. Instead of cutting ties with China, TikTok sued the federal government. That lawsuit has made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

If the Chinese Communist Party can influence TikTok, the CCP may be able to manipulate users or harvest private data on one of the world’s largest social media platforms. That ought to concern everyone.

In December, Family Council joined three dozen other leaders and organizations in an amicus brief against TikTok by Advancing American Freedom. The brief argues that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) does not respect free speech in China or in America, and that the First Amendment should not give foreign adversaries like the CCP an open door to influence tens of millions of Americans through social media.

As we keep saying, social media is 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 users or harvest private data on one of the world’s largest social media platforms. That ought to concern everyone.

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Scan this QR code to sign up for text alerts from Family Council.

We Need Your Help

A lot will happen in Arkansas over the next few weeks. There will be good bills to pass and bad bills to defeat at the legislature. There will be prayer meetings and large gatherings like Pastors Day and Home School Day at the capitol. When I think about the mission of Family Council, I often think about what Arkansas needs. Arkansas needs a strong, statewide organization that will promote biblical values. Arkansas needs someone who will take the values of Sunday morning church into the halls of government. Arkansas needs an organization who will educate and equip voters to make a difference in their communities. Arkansas needs a group willing to stand up for the unborn, the elderly, and everyone in between. That's where Family Council can help.

There are many excellent organizations that do good work in Arkansas and around the nation, but no one else does exactly what we do. Many years ago one of our staff members was meeting with a potential donor to talk about ways he might support our work. After a few minutes, the gentleman paused and said, "Your organization sounds like it's different from others." He was exactly right. We're a charity that helps people be better citizens. We're a lobbyist group that helps lawmakers pass better laws. We're a nonprofit that uses its resources to reach hearts and minds. There just aren't a lot of organizations like that.

Family Council would not be where it is today without friends like you who believe in us enough to support our work. That's why I hope you will send a generous, tax-deductible donation to support our work today, if you are able. You can mail your gift using the enclosed envelope or you can give securely online at FamilyCouncil.org. My team and I will do our best to stretch your gift as far as it will go to do the most good possible in Arkansas.

Thank you for your friendship and support. Please call or email our office if there's ever anything we can do for you.

Sincerely,



Jerry Cox, President

Thank you!!

P.S. By the time this letter reaches you, the Arkansas Legislature will have been in session for two or three weeks, and a lot of new issues will have come up. You can find the latest by going to FamilyCouncil.org and clicking on the Legislative News button. And make sure you are signed up on our email list. You can have email updates delivered to your inbox every weekday or every Friday.



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.

