



Arkansas CITIZEN

DECEMBER 2025



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in America for the
Sixth Year in a Row**

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The following is from Family Council's Assistant Director, David Cox:

Dear Friends,

"Every Christmas it's the same. I always end up playing a shepherd."

A little boy named Shermey says those words during the pageant rehearsal in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. I can relate, because in our church's Christmas play every year, it was the same for me, too: I always ended up playing a shepherd. While my friends landed more exciting roles as wise men or temple guards, I consistently got to wear a gunny sack and pretend to herd livestock around the sanctuary. Granted, one of my brothers had it worse. He always ended up playing a sheep. But that's beside the point. Every December, my fellow shepherds and I stood onstage in front of our smiling parents and grandparents while someone read these words:

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:8-14, KJV)

Over the years, I've thought a lot about those shepherds, and sometimes I like to put myself in their shoes: You're born and raised in rural Israel under Roman rule. Every day is more or less the same. You tend the sheep and try to make sure your family has enough to get by. And then one ordinary night something extraordinary happens. An army of angels appears, praising God and announcing the Savior's birth. So you run to Bethlehem and find the Savior lying in a manger just like the angel said. It's a miracle! You celebrate and tell everyone the good news. What an experience! And then you go back to the fields. The world moves on. The sheep still need to eat. The wolves and other wild animals still need to be chased away. The ground is still cold at night. The sun is still hot during the day. You likely don't hear anything else about your Savior until his earthly ministry begins 30 years later. Life goes on, but it's probably never quite the same again, either.

It's interesting how often in scripture God does something extraordinary that interrupts ordinary people on ordinary days. Joseph was sleeping in a prison dungeon when Pharaoh called him to interpret a dream. Mary was simply going about her business when Gabriel announced she would be the mother of Christ. Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fishing and mending their nets when Jesus called them to be his disciples. Ordinary people. Ordinary days. Extraordinary encounters.

That's one thing I appreciate about Christmas. It's a season when ordinary experiences can be extraordinary. Between candlelight services, family meals, gifts, carols, and decorations, there are opportunities for godly celebration, connection, and reflection. Life may go back to normal in January, but hopefully it isn't quite the same. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, I hope you and your family have extraordinary opportunities this Christmas season. From all of us and our families to you and yours: Merry Christmas!



Executive Director Jerry Cox

Arkansas Named Most Pro-Life State in America for the Sixth Year in a Row

By Jerry Cox, Executive Director

On October 27, Americans United for Life (AUL) announced Arkansas is the most pro-life state in America for the sixth year in a row. The pro-life organization ranks all 50 states based on state laws protecting the unborn, the elderly, the disabled, and the terminally ill. Family Council, Arkansas Right

to Life, and other pro-life leaders hosted a special press conference with Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders and AUL at the Arkansas Capitol Building. AUL highlighted the many pro-life laws and policies our state has enacted over the years, and Gov. Sanders recognized the state's lawmakers and constitutional officers for their pro-life accomplishments.

Arkansas has enacted dozens of good, pro-life laws since 1973. After the U.S. Supreme Court finally reversed *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, Arkansas was able to prohibit abortion except to save the life of the mother. This year, the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 387 of 2025 closing possible loopholes in the existing abortion law. The measure makes it clear that Arkansas law prohibits abortion except to save the life of the mother in a medical emergency. It also clarifies the definition of "medical emergency" in state law, and it strengthens legal protections for doctors who treat pregnant women. Gov. Sanders has signed many good, pro-life laws including Act 973 of 2025 to prohibit abortions performed due to an unborn baby's race, Act 485 of 2025 to prohibit giving a preg-

nant woman abortion drugs without her consent, and Act 1006 of 2025, Act 125 of 2024, and Act 622 of 2023 to provide \$5 million to support women with unplanned pregnancies. These good laws—and many other pro-life measures like them—are part of the reason Arkansas has been ranked the most pro-life state in America since 2021.

Arkansas Right to Life has been defending human life for 50 years, and Family Council has been at it for nearly 37. Ministers, churches, elected officials, pregnancy resource centers, and everyday Arkansans all have worked tirelessly to make Arkansas the pro-life state that it is today. Being pro-life is about much more than opposing abortion. Now that *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned and abortion in Arkansas is prohibited except to save the life of the mother, the pro-life movement in Arkansas has entered a new phase. We are focused on helping women and families with unexpected pregnancies, and we are making sure our laws respect and protect innocent human life at every stage from conception until natural death. Family Council looks forward to continuing that pro-life mission in 2026.



From left: Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders; AUL Senior Director of Public Relations and Communications Sarah Zagorski; Arkansas Right to Life Executive Director Rose Mimms; Family Council President Jerry Cox; Lt. Gov. Leslie Rutledge; and Secretary of State Cole Jester celebrate that Arkansas has been named the most pro-life state in America for the sixth year in a row.

Family Council's Greatest Hits from 2025

Every December we take time to look back and reflect on what our friends have helped us accomplish this year. At Family Council, we often say that this work belongs to the Lord, but it is sustained by His people. We are deeply grateful to everyone who makes this amazing work possible. There isn't enough room to capture everything that went on over the past 12 months, but below is a brief rundown of our "Greatest Hits" from 2025.

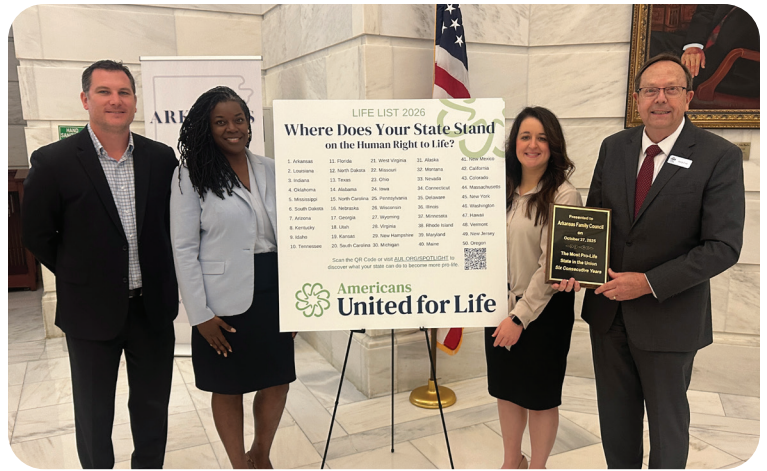
Fielding One of the Best Lobby Teams in the Nation at the Arkansas Capitol. Family Council is consistently able to field one of the best teams of statewide lobbyists in the nation. Our friends at national organizations often talk about how effective our staff is at the state capitol. No

one on our lobby team serves in the legislature, so none of us gets to vote on laws. Arkansas' legislators deserve credit for passing good bills and voting against bad ones. But Family Council still helps secure passage of good laws by being at the legislature and by informing and equipping everyday voters across the state to make their voices heard. This year, we worked with lawmakers to support dozens of good laws. These laws prevent abortion, provide funding for charities that help women with unplanned pregnancies, promote religious liberty, protect Arkansans from dangerous drugs, and much more. We also did our part to help stop bad laws at the legislature.

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From left: Luke McCoy, Stephanie Nichols, Erin Hogan, Charisse Camp, and Jerry Cox make up Family Council's team of lobbyists.



From left: Luke McCoy, Charisse Camp, Erin Hogan, and Jerry Cox pose with a copy of AUL's Life List and a plaque presented to Family Council recognizing Arkansas as the most pro-life state in America for the sixth year in a row.

Family Council's Greatest Hits from 2025 (continued)

Doing Our Part to Keep Arkansas the Most Pro-Life State in America. Our friends at Americans United for Life recognized Arkansas as the most pro-life state in the nation thanks to all of the good laws we have enacted that respect innocent human life from conception to natural death. Making Arkansas the most pro-life state in America took a lot of work from many different pro-life leaders. Ministers, churches, elected officials, pregnancy resource centers, and everyday Arkansans all have helped make Arkansas the pro-life state that it is today. Family Council has been pleased to do our part year after year to make sure our pro-life laws are the very best in the country. This year we were able to support good, pro-life laws that keep Arkansas as America's most pro-life state. Many pro-lifers don't realize that there are often serious ethical problems with the way doctors use assisted reproductive technologies like in vitro fertilization. Act 859 by Rep. Alyssa Brown (R – Heber Springs) and Sen. Jim Dotson (R – Bentonville) promotes ethical fertility treatments like restorative reproductive medicine in Arkansas, and it protects healthcare providers who have conscientious objections to unethical fertility procedures. The law did not receive as much attention as it probably deserved, but Act 859 and other good laws like it are part of the reason Arkansas continues to be America's most pro-life state.

Securing \$2M in Funding for Pregnancy Resource Centers. Since 2022, Family Council has worked with the Arkansas Legislature and the governor to secure funding every year for pregnancy resource centers. These state-funded grants have provided millions of dollars to charities in Arkansas. By working through existing charities, Arkansas is able to support women and children without creating new government offices or bureaucracy. Act 1006 of 2025 by the legislature's Joint Budget Committee

provides \$2 million for grants to pregnancy help organization—including pregnancy resource centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, and other charities that provide material support to women with unplanned pregnancies. The measure passed in April, and in July, 39 charities applied for this grant funding. We are working with our friends in government to see to it this funding is distributed to support women and unborn children in Arkansas.

Defending Homeschool Rights in Arkansas. One of our top priorities for this year was making sure no legislation would hurt homeschooling in Arkansas. Since 2020, homeschooling has grown to more than 30,000 students statewide, and more than 10,000 have applied for Education Freedom Account funding to help pay for their education under the 2023 LEARNS Act. Our state laws should not restrict homeschoolers' freedoms, and homeschoolers who want to take advantage of the Education Freedom Accounts should not be held to a different standard than private school students. We were able to work with our friends to discourage any laws that hurt homeschoolers. We have also been able to work with the Arkansas Department of Education and the Department of Higher Education to make sure homeschoolers who

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Right: On February 26, home schoolers from across the state gathered at the capitol to hear from lawmakers and watch the legislative process in action.

Family Council's Greatest Hits from 2025 (continued)

take concurrent credit high school and college courses continue to have access to scholarships.

On February 26, more than a thousand homeschoolers, policymakers, and elected officials gathered for Home School Day at the Capitol. Homeschoolers heard from Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders, Lt. Governor Leslie Rutledge, Attorney General Tim Griffin, Secretary of State Cole Jester, State Auditor Dennis Milligan, State Treasurer John Thurston, State Land Commissioner Tommy Land, and others. Rep. Cameron Cooper presented a special resolution in the Arkansas House of Representatives recognizing and honoring homeschooling across the state. Home School Day at the Capitol gives homeschool families a wonderful opportunity to gather with one another, meet legislators, watch committee meetings, and tour the capitol.

Supporting Good Laws and Defeating Bad Ones. Family Council has many friends in the Arkansas Legislature and at different organizations who want to pass good laws, and we are always happy to help them where we can. This year we were able to support passage of more than two dozen good laws that protect innocent human life, affirm homeschooling, safeguard religious freedom and rights of conscience in Arkansas, help keep dangerous drugs out of our communities, and more.

Growing Our Church Ambassador Network. Family Council launched its Church Ambassador Network to help bridge the gap between church leaders and community leaders. The Church Ambassador Network fosters intentional relationships between pastors and elected officials so pastors can minister to Arkansas' government leaders—offering wisdom, encouragement, and prayer. This year our Church Ambassador Network grew to include several hundred ministers from different churches, and we were able to host several meetings with Arkansas' elected officials.

Bringing Ministers and Church Leaders to the Capitol. On March 6, ministers and church leaders from across Arkansas gathered for Pastors' Day at the Capitol. Family Council and its Church Ambassador Network initiative sponsored this excellent event. This year we got to hear from Dr. Ronnie Floyd as well as different ministers and elected officials. Pastors' Day at the Capitol gives church leaders an opportunity to worship in the Capitol rotunda and pray over the state's policymakers—and it's one of the best things we do all year. Plenty of groups and organizations come to the capitol each week, but none of them gather for prayer and worship like we do.

Supporting Women and Children Through the ARFuture Foundation. Charisse Camp on our team helps lead the ARFuture Foundation. The foundation provides private grant funding to pregnancy resource centers that assist women with unplanned pregnancies. We also work together to help secure millions of dollars in public grant funding for these organizations from the State of Arkansas, and we are available to assist pregnancy help organizations as they navigate the state's grant application process. Now that abortion is prohibited except to save the life of the mother, pro-lifers must be available to help women with unplanned pregnancies. We are proud of the work we've been able to do in this area this year.

Working to Keep Wealthy Interests from Buying Their Way to the Ballot in Arkansas. We have written repeatedly about how Arkansas' ballot initiative process has become the opposite of what it was intended to be. The Arkansas Constitution lets canvassers circulate petitions to place measures on a general election ballot. Its original intent was to give citizens a way to function as a "legislative body." But instead of giving everyday people a way to enact

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Above: Dr. Ronnie Floyd speaks to ministers and elected officials at Pastors' Day at the Capitol 2025. Family Council sponsored this outstanding event through its Church Ambassador Network initiative.



Above: Charisse Camp (right) has been able to work closely with state officials such as former Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Human Services Kristi Putnam to promote maternal wellness and help women with unplanned pregnancies in Arkansas.



Above: Erin Hogan, Jerry Cox, and Stephanie Nichols met other conservative leaders for SoConCon 2025 over the summer. Stephanie was also a featured panel speaker and had the opportunity to share about privacy legislation Arkansas passed earlier this year.



Above: Dr. Jim Lagrone (left), Director of Family Council's Church Ambassador Network initiative, joined David Barton of WallBuilders at a press conference in Little Rock encouraging Arkansans to donate posters of the Ten Commandments to public buildings under a new state law.

Family Council's Greatest Hits from 2025 (continued)

their own laws, special interests have hired people to circulate petitions to place misleading, deceptive, and poorly written measures on the ballot in Arkansas. Last spring Arkansans testified at legislative committee meetings about how pro-abortion and pro-marijuana petition canvassers allegedly tried to provoke altercations and encouraged people to sign petitions multiple times. This year, Family Council supported passage of several good laws that bring clarity and accountability to the initiative process. These laws will help stop Arkansas' ballot initiative process from being a tool that multibillion-dollar corporations can use to write themselves into the state constitution.

Serving Families Through the Arkansas Justice Institute.

This year, attorney Stephanie Nichols has helped our Arkansas Justice Institute initiative serve families across the state. When a student in Northwest Arkansas was pressured at school to use "they/them" pronouns for classmates, Stephanie was able to help explain how Arkansas law protected that student. When homeschoolers have complicated questions about state or federal education laws, Stephanie is just a phone call away. Our long-term goal is to build a network of Christian attorneys in Arkansas who are here to promote good legislation at the capitol and support everyday families when their basic freedoms are threatened.

Promoting Religious Freedom in the Public Square. This year, Family Council supported Act 573 of 2025 by Sen. Jim Dotson and Rep. Alyssa Brown letting Arkansans place privately funded copies of the Ten Commandments in public schools and other public buildings. We also have worked with outside groups to help distribute posters of the Ten Commandments across Arkansas. In August, we coordinated a press conference in Little Rock alongside our friends at

First Liberty, WallBuilders, Patriot Mobile, and the Arkansas General Assembly to encourage Arkansans to donate posters of the Ten Commandments to their local public buildings. The ACLU has sued to strike down Act 573, but we believe it is a good law and that our federal courts ultimately will uphold it as constitutional.

This year, we also released a new and improved *Faith at Schools* toolkit designed to help students, parents, and educators exercise their religious liberties in public schools. We promoted the academic study of the Bible and released time for religious instruction in public schools. We also supported events like Bring Your Bible to School Day, the state's annual Day of Prayer for Arkansas Students, and See You at the Pole. The free exercise of religion is not a private right to worship. It's a right to openly live and act on your faith. We are pleased to support the free exercise of religion in Arkansas.

Speaking the Truth in the Media, in Print, and Online.

When the media needs a conservative perspective on issues or legislation, they often call us. This year we had the

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Right: On June 12, Jerry Cox spoke with reporter Caroline Derby about the ACLU's lawsuit over placing the Ten Commandments in schools and public buildings.

Family Council's Greatest Hits from 2025 (continued)

opportunity to do several interviews with members of the media. We've also built our own platform at FamilyCouncil.org and on social media. The articles and videos on our website reach an average of 4,000 people a week, and our *Arkansas Citizen* update letter reaches some 10,000 Arkansans every month.

Standing Firm Against the Pro-LGBT Agenda. It's been 10 years since then-President Barack Obama said that legalizing same-sex marriage was a "victory for America." Shortly before he left office, President Obama issued federal guidance telling public schools to let boys identify as girls and give them access to girls' locker rooms, showers, changing areas, and restrooms at school. In Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and other states, business owners were dragged into court for declining to participate in same-sex weddings. It took the better part of a decade, but things may finally be improving. Gallup reports most Americans believe it's wrong to change a person's gender. Public opinion poll-

ing shows support for same-sex marriage has fallen among adults in the U.S. since 2021—especially among Republicans. This year the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Arkansas' SAFE Act that protects children from sex-change surgeries, puberty blockers, and cross-sex hormones.

Promoting Biblical Values in Federal Court. Over the past year, we have had several opportunities to join amicus briefs in federal court cases. These amicus briefs let us band together with other conservative leaders from around the nation to encourage our judges to uphold biblical values. This year we have been part of amicus briefs asking the U.S. Supreme Court to protect children from gender transitions, let people of faith live and operate according to their religious convictions, and keep men out of women's sports. We've also joined amicus briefs in lower court cases in New York and elsewhere. Federal rulings can affect all Americans, and we have been pleased to join our friends around the country in standing for biblical values in court this year.

141 Public School Students Enrolled to Study the Bible Academically This Year

Data from the Arkansas Department of Education shows 141 public school students have enrolled in courses to study the Bible academically this semester. Act 1440 of 2013 and Act 1016 of 2019 let public schools offer elective, academic courses on "the Bible and its influence on literature, art, music, culture, and politics." The law says the course must be objective and nonsectarian, and it must meet the same academic standards as other elective courses offered in public schools. Anyone wishing to teach the course must be licensed to teach in the State of Arkansas. According to the Arkansas Department of Education's academic framework for the classes, the course is offered as a one-semester

elective in which students learn about the Bible and its influence on literature, art, music, and culture.

Of course, Christians believe the Bible is meant to be learned and lived out in daily life. Still, studying the Bible academically is a great opportunity.

Over the past 12 years, different school districts in the state have chosen to offer academic courses on the Bible under state law. New data from the Arkansas Department of Education shows at least 141 public school students have enrolled in elective, academic courses on the Bible at 13 schools so far for the 2025–2026 school year. It's good that Arkansas lets students learn about the Bible at school. After all, no single book has been more influential on our civilization. Of course, Christians believe the Bible is meant to be learned and lived out in daily life. Still, studying the Bible academically is a great opportunity.

If you are interested in promoting the academic study of the Bible in your local public school district, give us a call at (501) 375-7000, and we will tell you more.

Left: Family Council Staff Attorney Stephanie Nichols (left) and Rep. Alyssa Brown (right) present the Religious Rights at Public School Act to lawmakers on March 18. This good law helps inform parents, students, and educators about Arkansas' Academic Study of the Bible courses.



U.S. Supreme Court Declines to Reconsider Same-Sex Marriage Ruling

On November 10, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review a case challenging its 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling on same-sex marriage. Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis—who has been taken to court for declining to issue same-sex marriage licenses—had filed an appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court challenging the essence of the *Obergefell* ruling. By deciding not to hear her request, the Court is leaving *Obergefell* alone for now.

From 2004 to 2015, voters in more than three-fifths of the country democratically passed laws and amendments defining marriage in their respective states. In most cases, those measures defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Voters in three states chose to define marriage differently. The Court's *Obergefell* decision struck down every one of those state marriage laws.

The conversation about marriage and family will continue.

The question has always been about how marriage will be defined in America and who gets to write that definition. *Obergefell* was a poorly reasoned decision from the moment it was handed down. The Constitution does not give the federal government the power to redefine marriage. That authority rests with the states and with the people. By refusing to take this case, the Court has chosen to leave in place a ruling that short-circuited the democratic process.

Millions of Americans still believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman, and that belief is rooted not only in religious conviction but in thousands of years of human history. The Court may choose not to review *Obergefell* today, but the conversation about marriage and family will continue. We remain committed to defending the freedom of people who hold to the traditional understanding of marriage.

Family Council Advocating for \$2M Disbursement to Pregnancy Centers

In April, Governor Sanders signed Act 1006 of 2025 by the legislature's Joint Budget Committee providing \$2 million for grants to pregnancy help organizations—including pregnancy resource centers, maternity homes, adoption agencies, and other charities that support women with unplanned pregnancies. Thirty-nine charities applied for this grant funding when the application window opened last July. In October, Governor Sanders discussed the funding in her statements about Arkansas being named the most pro-life state in America for the sixth year in a row. However, last month Family Council learned the Department of Finance


Family Council Releases 2025 General Assembly Report Showing How Legislators Voted on 24 Key Measures

On October 28, Family Council released its 2025 Arkansas General Assembly Report. This report is a snapshot of how lawmakers voted on key legislation related to social and moral issues. Guided by our mission of promoting, protecting, and strengthening traditional family values, Family Council focused heavily on 24 laws that passed in the Arkansas House and Senate during the 2025 legislative session. These measures dealt with religious liberty, the sanctity of human life, education, alcohol, marijuana, Arkansas' ballot initiative process, and similar issues. Family Council supported 21 of those laws and opposed three of them.

This General Assembly Report is an educational resource for voters. It is not an endorsement of any candidate or political party. It does not measure any lawmakers' integrity, commitment to their faith, work ethic, or rapport with Family Council. It is only a report on how each lawmaker voted on 24 specific measures. Not all lawmakers voted on every bill, and the report notes when that is the case.

One of the most common questions Family Council's supporters ask is, "How did my legislator vote?" This report should help answer that question. You can download the General Assembly Report on all 135 state senators and representatives at FamilyCouncil.org or using the QR code below.

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and Administration had not taken any action on the grant applications. The situation is very fluid, but as of November 17, our staff is talking with lawmakers, the governor's office, and others about how the state plans to approve eligible, pro-life charities for the Pregnancy Help Organization Grants under Act 1006. **Please pray that this grant award process goes smoothly so that pregnancy help organizations across Arkansas can get this funding and continue assisting women with unplanned pregnancies as soon as possible.**

Help us raise
\$75K
by December 31

You can multiply your impact when you give to Family Council this month. A very generous donor has pledged \$75,000 as a matching challenge gift to Family Council during the month of December. This is the largest matching challenge in Family Council's history. We are working hard to match this donor's pledge, dollar-for-dollar, by midnight on December 31. You can help us reach our \$75,000 goal by going to FamilyCouncil.org and clicking on the Donate button. You are also welcome to mail in your gift, if you prefer. We appreciate all of our friends who are helping us meet this goal!

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM ALL OF US AT FAMILY COUNCIL

As Christmas approaches and the year draws to a close, I want to thank you for helping us be so successful in 2025. By the grace of God, this year we were able to do a lot of good in Arkansas. We have been able to do our part to enact good laws, defend the unborn, support homeschooling, stand against the radical LGBT agenda, and help make Arkansas a better place to live, work, and raise a family. I cannot tell you enough what you and your family mean to us. Your kind words, your friendship, your financial support, and your prayers are what keep me and the rest of the team at Family Council going. Without you and our other friends across the state, we would have failed a long time ago. Thank you for standing with us.



From left: Erin Hogan, Jim Lagrone, Leslie Byrd, David Cox, Jerry Cox, Doris Cox, Luke McCoy, Stephanie Nichols, Charisse Camp, and Lisa Crook.

I hope you will give a generous, tax-deductible donation before the end of the year, if you are able. I promise we will do the best we can to stretch your gift as far as possible to do good in Arkansas next year. You can give using the enclosed envelope and response card. You can also give securely online at FamilyCouncil.org.

Thank you for your support. You've helped us accomplish so much this year, and I know there will be many more success stories to tell next year. Please let me know if there is ever anything my staff or I can do for you.

Sincerely,

Jerry Cox, President

Thank you!!

P.S. Thank you for standing with us. I hope you will read the flier enclosed with this letter to learn more about Family Council's vision and goals for the future. You've helped us accomplish so much this year—and there is so much that we want to do in 2026. **From our families to yours, my staff and I want to wish you a very merry Christmas!!**