



Arkansas CITIZEN

OCTOBER 2026

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

Dear Friends,

"Is your life worth two minutes?"

That's a question that author and speaker Jon Acuff asked in the September 1 edition of his "Try This!" newsletter. In it, Acuff shared a story about being forced to wait for two minutes at a crosswalk on a busy highway during one of his morning runs. None of us likes to wait. Two minutes feels like forever when you're waiting for a light to turn green. Some of us might rather risk hurrying across the highway as soon as there's a decent gap in the traffic. But Acuff asks a simple question that applies to much more than just waiting at an intersection:

Is my life worth two minutes?

The answer is "Yes," of course, but you'd be surprised how many times we fail to ask simple questions like that.

"Is losing my marriage worth getting better at JiuJitsu?"

I don't do JiuJitsu, but a friend told me that a number of young dads at his gym are training four nights a week from 6–9 PM. *"It hit me the other day that they miss dinner and bedtime with their kids to get slightly better at a sport they'll never go pro in,"* he said.

It was no longer a hobby. It was a hiding place.

They were sacrificing their marriages for JiuJitsu. ...

Life moves so fast that often we don't give ourselves time to ask the simple questions. It's all a tradeoff. You trade your time, energy, and money for something you think is worth it. Saving two minutes and possibly getting hit by a car was not worth it.

Acuff's words reminded me of advice a friend at church once gave me: "Before you do something, ask yourself what fruit it's likely to produce." Everything we say or do has consequences. It's like seeds planted in the ground that grow and produce fruit in time, and that fruit can be good or bad. Hosea 8:7 reminds us that those who sow the wind will harvest the whirlwind. Galatians 6:8 says those who sow to please the Spirit will harvest eternal life. How often do we plant "seeds" without thinking about the fruit those seeds will give us?

I've been active on Family Council's legislative efforts for more than 15 years. A little over a decade ago, I decided I didn't want to suggest a legislative idea to our team or our friends unless I could name something good that would come from that legislation. In other words, a pro-life law had to reduce the number of abortions in Arkansas. A religious freedom law had to protect the free exercise of religion in a practical way. Pausing to ask, "What fruit will this law produce?" has helped our team at Family Council make decisions more times than most people know. I hope you will keep reading to learn more about the "seeds" we have been planting—and how you can plant "seeds" that will produce good fruit in Arkansas as well.



inside:

**Here is Your 2026
Arkansas Voter's Guide**

**Homeschool Surge
Continues in Arkansas**

**Arkansans on Track to
Wager Nearly \$1 Billion
on Sports this Year**

& MORE



Executive Director Jerry Cox

My Thoughts: Here is Your 2026 Arkansas Voter's Guide

By Jerry Cox, Executive Director

Enclosed with this letter is your free 2026 Arkansas Voter's Guide for the November General Election. Early voting begins on October 19. Your local county clerk's office can provide you with a list of early voting polling sites.

You can see our voter's guide online at ArkansasVotersGuide.com, and while you are there, you can order free printed copies of the guide for your family, your friends, or your church.

Family Council has produced voter's guides like this one every election year since 1990. We survey the candidates on a wide variety of issues, and we publish their responses in print and online.

Our Arkansas Voter's Guide is nonpartisan. We don't use it to endorse anyone running for office or favor one candidate over another. We simply want Arkansans to be able to vote wisely when

they head to the polls. The Arkansas Voter's Guide tells people where the candidates stand on the issues that matter to them. That's good for everyone.

We plan to distribute tens of thousands of voter's guides like this one in print and online this year. If you need more copies of the Arkansas Voter's Guide for your church, your friends, or your family, visit ArkansasVotersGuide.com or call our office at (501) 375-7000.

Homeschool Surge Continues in Arkansas

The number of homeschoolers in Arkansas has more than doubled over the past ten years and is on track to go even higher. In 2016, there were 19,520 homeschoolers across the state. By 2023, homeschooling had surged to nearly 30,000 students. And now official reports from the Arkansas Department of Education show that 40,470 children filed as homeschoolers during the 2026 school year.



One reason for the recent surge in homeschooling may be the Educational Freedom Account (EFA) program that Arkansas established under the LEARNS Act in 2023. The EFA program makes it possible for students to use public funds to pay for an education at a public or private school or at home. Thousands of homeschool students have taken advantage of the program, and test scores show they are excelling.

Many families feel that public education has deteriorated over the years, and they don't like the direction it is heading. For those families, the EFA program offers real alterna-

Many families feel that public education has deteriorated over the years, and they don't like the direction it is heading. For those families, the EFA program offers real alternatives that help their children succeed.

tives that help their children succeed. That is part of the reason Family Council and its Education Alliance homeschool division have supported the EFA program. As more families make good use of the EFA program, we believe Arkansas' homeschool numbers could go even higher in the coming year.

Arkansans on Track to Wager Nearly \$1 Billion on Sports this Year

In the next ten seconds, Arkansans will wager an average of nearly \$300 on sports. Nationwide, sports betting is legal in 39 states—including Arkansas. In August, Family Council received financial data from the Department of Finance and Administration showing that from January 1 through July 31, sports bets in Arkansas totaled more than \$529 million—an average of roughly \$2.5 million per day or \$29 every second.

At that rate, Arkansas is on track to wager as much as \$912.5 million on sports by the end of December. It's possible that football season will drive Arkansas' sports betting numbers higher. But even if that \$2.5 million daily average were cut in half this fall, Arkansas' sports betting for the year would still top hundreds of millions of dollars. That's a lot of money—and a growing body of evidence shows this type of gambling is causing serious harm.

Studies show people who gamble on sports may be twice as likely to suffer from gambling problems. When sports gam-

bling happens online—like most of it does in Arkansas—the rate is even higher. A study by Northwestern University found that for every dollar spent on sports betting, household investment falls by an average of \$2. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the Ethics and Public Policy Center, researchers at UCLA, and bankruptcy attorneys across the country all say sports betting is driving a wave of financial problems like credit card delinquencies and bankruptcies.

Sports betting is out of control. It's corrupting sports, and it's ruining lives. Can Arkansas really afford to wager a billion dollars on sports every year? Powerful corporations are trying to make gambling part of everyday life. That's why it's important for Arkansas to protect its citizens and families from predatory gambling. Otherwise, gambling problems will simply continue wrecking lives and hurting families in our state.

State of Arkansas Could Receive Nearly \$250 Million from Settlement with Meta

On August 26, social media giant Meta agreed to a \$17.1 billion settlement with dozens of state attorneys general over a slate of consumer protection lawsuits. Meta settled the cases the week before CEO Mark Zuckerberg was set to take the stand in a landmark lawsuit that claimed Meta routinely collected data on children under 13 without parental consent, in violation of federal law. The lawsuit also alleged the company knowingly designed its platforms to addict young users and hid what the company knew about the harm it caused.

Under the settlement, Meta will be required to shut teen accounts down overnight and limit how long kids spend on Facebook and Instagram. Meta will also hide the "like" counts it built to keep kids hooked, and it will implement age verification and age-appropriate content controls. The settlement does not include any admission of wrongdoing on Meta's part or an apology to anyone who may have been harmed by Meta's platforms.

Here is what the Settlement Agreement says about Arkansas, specifically:

Meta will pay the State of Arkansas \$17,245,993.63 every year from now through 2035. That comes to \$172.4 million total. The settlement money will go directly to Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin's office. The Attorney General's office has told the media that the settlement funds will be spent on initiatives related to mental health and keeping kids safe.

Meta could be forced to pay Arkansas even more money if certain "contingencies" in the settlement are met. For example, if Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube become

subject to teen age-verification and usage requirements that are substantially similar to Meta's—and if certain other conditions are met—Meta would pay Arkansas another \$7.4 million per year.

Children deserve proactive protection online. If tech companies won't give children that protection, then it's up to voters and elected officials to make sure they get it.

Several lawsuits are currently in play against TikTok and other social media platforms that could force them to adopt youth-safety and usage restrictions that are similar to Meta's. Between the minimum payments and the other contingencies in the Settlement Agreement, Arkansas could receive close to \$250 million from Meta over the next decade.

Tech platforms like Meta are multibillion-dollar corporations. The men and women who profit from these businesses have a responsibility to protect their users—especially teenagers. Children deserve proactive protection online. If tech companies won't give children that protection, then it's up to voters and elected officials to make sure they get it. Family Council appreciates Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin for going to court to protect kids online and fighting to hold companies like Meta responsible when they harm children.



A Staggering Number of Young Men are Trapped in “Addiction Economy” of Gambling and Pornography

Approximately one in eight men ages 18 to 29 use pornography, gamble, and play video games every single day, according to the Institute for Family Studies (IFS). The IFS report released in August is based on a YouGov survey of 2,000 Gen Z men living in the United States.

In a statement online, sociology professor Brad Wilcox of the University of Virginia said the report shows, “We have a generation of young men trapped in the ‘addiction economy’—and the numbers are staggering.” Wilcox pointed out that the data shows 11.9% of men in their late teens and twenties use pornography, gamble, and play video games—all three—every single day. Almost one in four young men said they gambled daily. More than one in four (27%) reported using pornography daily.

It’s worth remembering the news isn’t all “doom and gloom” for Gen Z. We have written before about the “quiet revival” taking place among young adults in America and abroad. Young men and women alike have driven Bible sales to record levels, and Gen Z is partly responsible for a rebound in church attendance. That’s good news.

But the IFS report’s findings are still deeply concerning. Millions of young adults are trapped by addiction—and in some cases, major companies are profiting from it. There is nothing wrong with companies earning money, but the “addiction economy” exploits people mentally, emotionally, and financially, and it ruins lives. That’s always wrong.

Arkansas has taken steps to protect young people from internet gambling, pornography, and other harmful activities. Clearly more work still needs to be done. Family Council wants to work with Arkansans to address the “addiction economy” in our state.

Family Council Joins Amicus Brief Defending Parental Rights in 9th Circuit Court

Last month, Family Council joined an amicus brief defending parental rights in the *Mirabelli v. Bonta* lawsuit currently before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit. Parents and teachers are challenging a California school district policy that requires teachers to deceive parents about their child’s gender transition at school. On September 2, Advancing American Freedom filed an amicus brief on behalf of Family Council and dozens of other pro-family organizations urging the 9th Circuit court to affirm parental rights. The brief argues that “the fundamental right of parents to direct the upbringing of their children is essential to liberty and is deeply rooted in American tradition and practice,” and that schools undermine parental rights when they deceive parents about a child’s gender dysphoria or social transition at school.

Unfortunately, the school policy in California is not an isolated incident. Pro-LGBT activists have used public schools to promote transgender ideology and gender confusion to kids in many different ways. Our friends at Alliance Defending Freedom have spoken out about how schools are hiding important information about students from their parents. But policymakers, legal experts, and parents are pushing back.

Arkansas has enacted good laws that protect children and affirm parental rights. But federal court cases like the one in California could affect schools nationwide. That’s why it’s important for us to stand up for students and parents in this case.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Education announced it was investigating four school districts in Kansas for secret gender transitions after a complaint alleged that school officials let male students into females’ private spaces and sports at school and hid students’ sexual identity confusion from their parents. Family Council also joined dozens of other pro-family organizations from across the country last year in an amicus brief regarding a New York school district that treated a middle-school girl as if she were a boy without her mother’s knowledge or consent.

Arkansas has enacted good laws to help prevent schools from socially transitioning children or promoting radical pro-LGBT ideology in the classroom. These laws protect children and affirm parental rights. But federal court cases like the one in California could affect schools nationwide. That’s why it’s important for us to stand up for students and parents in this case.



John Stonestreet is President of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

The Population Zombie Strikes Again

Overpopulation fears keep returning, despite failed predictions and devastating consequences.

By John Stonestreet, Colson Center for Christian Worldview

A group of scientists are, once again, predicting imminent disaster because of overpopulation. "It might sound like the evil plan of a nefarious villain," a recent *Daily Mail* article read, "but scientists now say that we need to halve Earth's population to save

the planet." The researchers have even offered "non-coercive measures" to lower the global population to four billion by the year 2200. Of course, that includes "providing women in low-income countries with family planning services." Their plan, according to *The Daily Mail*, is similar to that of Marvel villain Thanos, who thought he could eliminate suffering by eliminating half the human race.

Rather than seeing people as incredible resources of creativity and ingenuity, Thanos and these scientists assume that more people means less food and less wealth. Like a zombie that keeps coming back no matter how many times it's killed, this thinking is a rehash of the flawed work of Paul Erlich. His 1968 book, *The Population Bomb*, which predicted global starvation and utter economic collapse if the population at that time didn't stop growing, is perhaps the best example in recent memory that "ideas have consequences" and that bad ideas have victims.

In fact, as an obituary to Ehrlich admitted, his ideas "encouraged mass sterilization program[s] in India and the one-child policy in China and influenced how children everywhere were viewed and valued." His predictions were, as Chuck Colson noted in 2001, spectacularly wrong.

"[A]lmost none of the dire predictions associated with what Ehrlich called 'The Population Bomb' came to pass. That's because the doomsayers didn't understand what it really means to be human. Ehrlich's was only the most dramatic expression of a worldview that saw reducing birth rates as the key to not only humanity's, but the entire planet's fate. In this view, people were akin to parasites. They consumed resources and gave little, if anything, back. Population had to be contained both for our sake and for the sake of the earth."

In fact, since Ehrlich's ideas became mainstream, the world population has more than doubled, from 3.8 billion people in 1972 to an estimated 8.3 billion today. Yet, instead of mass starvations and increased conflicts over resources, crop yields have increased dramatically and global rates of undernourishment and starvation have been reduced by more than half.

Humans are simply not the virus that Ehrlich, Thanos, and these scientists claim. Yes, we do create a mess of problems, but we are also innovators of additional resources and new solutions. That, of course, makes sense if the Biblical story of reality is true and the naturalistic one is not. If we really were made co-creators by the One who created all things, humans are not just consumers but producers who are tasked with cultivating the creation.

Vain ideas of population control have left the nations of the world with a birth dearth. Russia, China, and Japan are notably struggling to maintain their numbers even as their older population phases out of the workforce. The same is happening in the U.S.

In contrast, population scare warnings have very real victims—tens of millions, in fact. In just the last 50 years, over 60 million Americans have been killed through abortion, and among what has driven the practice is the fear of bringing a child into a dying world. In China, where the myth of the population bomb led to the horrific one-child policy, some 300 million babies were slaughtered, many against the will of their mothers.

Instead of saving the planet, vain ideas of population control have left the nations of the world with a birth dearth. Russia, China, and Japan are notably struggling to maintain their numbers even as their older population phases out of the workforce. The same is happening in the U.S.

Zombie ideas of overpopulation and human pestilence get humanity tragically wrong and misunderstands the created world. Had Ehrlich's claims remained in his books, the damage would have been minimal. But his ideas, as they tend to do, grew feet and walked into the real world of image bearers. They wreaked havoc. It's long past time for this zombie to stay dead.

John Stonestreet serves as president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. He is a sought-after author and speaker on areas of faith and culture, theology, worldview, education and apologetics. John is the daily voice of Breakpoint, the nationally syndicated commentary on the culture, founded by the late Chuck Colson. Copyright 2026 by the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. Reprinted from BreakPoint.org with permission.

Family Council Joins Brief Asking Supreme Court to Protect Prayer Meetings

On September 8, Family Council joined 55 other conservative, pro-family leaders in an amicus brief asking the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the right to host prayer meetings at home. The case is *Grand v. City of University Heights, Ohio*. Daniel Grand is an Orthodox Jew challenging an Ohio city's attempt to use zoning laws to stop him from hosting a prayer group in his home. Our friends at Advancing American Freedom write, "After a neighbor complained to the city's mayor, the city sent a cease-and-desist letter that said the prayer group was tantamount to operating a house of worship, which would violate the city's zoning regulations." The amicus brief points out that Americans have met for prayer and worship in homes throughout our nation's history, and that the Constitution protects people's freedom to exercise their faith.

Unfortunately, city officials have a history of using zoning and property laws against churches and people of

faith. For example, in 2022, public officials in the Philadelphia suburb of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, issued a zoning citation against two churches operating food ministries in their community. Officials later withdrew the citations following public backlash. In 2015, the Houston Housing Authority tried to seize church property under eminent domain so it could build a library and a housing project. City officials backed off after two churches filed a lawsuit to stop the housing authority's plan.

To put it plainly, this case in Ohio is important, because if city officials can use zoning laws to stop a Jewish prayer group, they could use zoning laws to stop a Christian prayer group. The free exercise of religion is a fundamental right—and it deserves to be protected at every level of government.



Erin Hogan, Family Council
Government Affairs and Projects

Courageous Culture Building in a World of Desecration

By Erin Hogan, Family Council

Walking the streets of Edinburgh, Scotland I saw a long line of historic buildings and cobblestone streets that millions traverse every year. As my group walked along the historic alleyways and the famous Royal Mile, rainbow flags came into view. They were being displayed for the pride parade taking place downtown. I even saw a "pride" banner on the grounds of the Tolbooth

Kirk which was originally designed to be a meeting hall for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In the same field of view, a Scotsman, dressed in full kilt, played Amazing Grace on the bagpipes. I saw an older gentleman bravely standing amidst the pro-LGBTQ crowd with a sign that told people Jesus loved them, calling them to repent.

I had no idea there would be a pride parade that day with hundreds of people crowding the streets, including drag queens. The city center became incredibly crowded with an influx of people, some celebrating, others taken aback at what they saw, and some simply trying to eat their lunch.

I recall thinking of the dramatic contrast between the noise of the bagpipe blaring out Amazing Grace and the boisterous clamoring of people celebrating pride, all in a beautiful country that has such a rich history of Christian reformers.

Back in the U.S, things are hardly different. One day I saw a bumper sticker that read, "I love my gay dog." After seeing that, I ironically thought about Aristotle saying that

the thing which separates the human animal from all other animals was man's ability to reason. Now humans are confusing the poor animals with their "reasoning." Just like the scene in Edinburgh, these sorts of odd statements are a downstream effect of humanity's denial of God and His statutes. It is an all too unfortunate result of individuals and families who push away the abundant blessings that God offers.

Vice President JD Vance's new book *Communion* talks of this denial of God's truth. In the book, the Vice President explains his own return to faith, but he also talks about the societal disease that has afflicted society as a whole—Secularism. Individuals, societies, politics, marriages, and the dynamics of world leadership are infected by the destruction of Secularism. As a result, life spans are shorter, people are having fewer kids or none at all, gay marriage has risen, and hopelessness is rampant.

Thankfully, truth can be found in God's word and His gospel. Every human being is made in the image of God and because of this, our value system should stem from that understanding. As Christians, we should always be making the case for a return to faith in God as the foundation for flourishing families and fulfilling lives. This is culture building. When humanity gets the truth distorted, it needs the light of the gospel. If Christians do not stand up and fight secularism and the distortions it inflicts, humanity will fall into the depravity that calls dogs gay and more tragically, desecrate themselves in the process.

Erin Hogan has worked with Family Council since January of 2019, where she serves as Director of Government Relations.



HELP OPPOSE

Mail-Order Abortion Drugs IN ARKANSAS

Family Council is urging all Arkansans to ask Congress and President Trump to stop mail-order abortion. In Arkansas, abortion is generally prohibited except to save the life of the mother, and it is a crime to mail abortion drugs like RU-486 into the state. But in 2022, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration started letting abortionists distribute abortion drugs by mail. To make matters worse, pro-abortion lawmakers in other states have passed “shield laws” that prevent abortionists from being taken to court or prosecuted if they mail abortion drugs into pro-life states like Arkansas. That’s why Family Council is doing as much as possible to stop mail-order abortion drugs at the federal level.

You can ask your leaders in Washington to stop mail-order abortion drugs by scanning the QR code on this page or going to abortioncrimebymail.com.

Scan this QR code to ask your congressmen and President Trump to stop mail-order abortion drugs.



President Trump Nominates Arkansas Federal Judge Lee Rudofsky for Eighth Circuit

On August 12, President Trump issued a statement on Truth Social announcing his intention to nominate U.S. District Judge Lee Rudofsky to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. As of September 14, his nomination is still pending before the U.S. Senate.

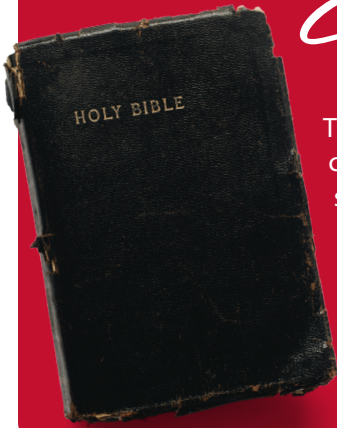
Family Council is very pleased with Judge Rudofsky’s nomination to the Eighth Circuit. He has served as a federal judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas since 2019. Judge Rudofsky is a graduate of Cornell University and Harvard Law School, and he has experience with constitutional law. Before becoming a federal judge, he served as Solicitor General for the State of Arkansas, where he tirelessly defended state laws and policies in court—including policies that protected taxpayers from subsidizing abortionists like



On August 12, President Trump issued a statement on Truth Social announcing his intention to nominate U.S. District Judge Lee Rudofsky to serve on the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

Planned Parenthood through Medicaid. While there were many other qualified candidates for the position, we are confident Judge Rudofsky would do an excellent job serving on the Eighth Circuit, if the United States Senate confirms him.

Left: Judge Lee Rudofsky has served in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas since 2019.



Students: Bring Your Bible to School on October 1!

Thursday, October 1, is national Bring Your Bible to School Day. This is a day for students across the country to exercise their First Amendment rights by bringing copies of God's Word with them to school. It's also an opportunity for students to discuss their faith and share the gospel with their friends outside of class time. Bring Your Bible to School Day is a movement sponsored by our friends at Focus on the Family.

Last year, more than 1.3 million students and 10,000 churches participated in this amazing event! If you don't have a student in public school, there still may be ways you or your church can help Bring Your Bible to School Day be successful. **Take Action: Visit BringYourBible.com to learn more.**

Will Help Us to Make Arkansas a Better Place to Live, Work, and Raise a Family?

We're just a little over 90 days away from the end of the year, and this is a critical time for us at Family Council. The 2026 election is here, and the 2027 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. We want to grow our work in the coming months, and we need more friends to partner with us financially to help it grow.

If you have never given to Family Council, 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. I believe that by working together, we can make Arkansas a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

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,

Jerry Cox, President

Thank you!!

P.S. I hope you appreciate this free voter's guide from Family Council. If you need additional guides for your family or your church, please call us at (501) 375-7000 or go to ArkansasVotersGuide.com. Our guides do not favor one candidate over another — which means churches are free to distribute them. Thank you for your friendship and financial 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.

