

March 2016

Dear Friends and Supporters,

During the Alabama legislative session each year, the Southeast Law Institute provides a great deal of free bill drafting, legal advice and testimony on legislation related to religious freedom, the sanctity of life, parental rights, healthcare issues, and other issues that we have sought to protect through legal processes since the early 1980s. Even with a Republican led legislature, we find that these issues are still under threat. We have been very busy this year and will provide you an update soon.

This month's Educational Update is more philosophical in nature than most of our Updates, which are usually factual and legal. But factual and legal things are also societal and cultural. Many believe America is coming to a cultural crossroads. Will she maintain the conservative and constitutional values that rescued America during the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century?

We can look at many factors. One is the shallowness of this year's presidential campaign. Another of great significance is the death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. Justice Scalia was appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1986 as an Associate Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. Immediately he began to consolidate and protect the constitutional structure of the values that had been under attack for decades in America by liberal opponents of American culture. In the 1960s we saw the removal of prayer from public schools, in 1973 the legalization of abortion on demand, and the diminution of the Free Exercise Clause of Religion, among other things. Justice Scalia was the leader of the conservative branch of the court. He never hesitated to attack destructive assaults on the Constitution, always doing so in a witty and scholarly way. Many feared his ability to pierce and deflate puffed up and specious arguments.

Justice Scalia was often in the minority of the five-four opinions on many of these issues. Abortion could not be overturned. And sometimes, his positions though seemingly contrary to conservative values, turned out to be best in the long run. For example, in *Smith v. Oregon*, Justice Scalia seemed to destroy the Free Exercise of Religion Clause of the First Amendment. In the end, the Clause was actually strengthened and 40 years of erosion was restored. Justice Scalia's death portends further problems for America. We must pray diligently that the selection and timing of a new Supreme Court Justice will be a blessing to America and not another blow to her Judeo-Christian foundation.

I believe the best thing we can say now is that God is sovereign and man is not.

Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston