

AN EDUCATIONAL UPDATE FROM
THE SOUTHEAST LAW INSTITUTE™, INC.

To: SLI Supporters
Date: January 2017
From: A. Eric Johnston
Re: Pro-Life Legislation for the 2017 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature

The following is a letter sent by the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition to all pro-life Senators and Representatives in the Alabama Legislature. We assisted in the preparation and research for the letter, as well as drafting the proposed legislative bills referenced in the letter. It is important we be cohesive in our effort to protect the sanctity of life. As you may have contact with your elected officials, let them know your support for this effort.

Dear (Representative and Senator):

I am writing on behalf of the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition (“APLC”). APLC began as a joint effort of all pro-life organizations and other pro-family groups in the state in 1990. APLC is a meeting point for pro-life efforts. I am writing you because you are a pro-life legislator.

The Alabama Legislature has passed some very good laws. However, virtually all of those laws have ended up in the federal courts. When we try to push the envelope, Federal Judge Myron Thompson in the Middle District of Alabama gets the case and enjoins the law. While there should be a random selection of judges, that is not the case. There is nothing we can do about that. For the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals (the review court for Alabama, Georgia and Florida), democrat appointed judges hold 78% of the active seats, 45% of which were appointed by Barack Obama. That means we have further difficulties in the review of Alabama laws.

Now and for the foreseeable future, it is not advisable for Alabama to pass laws that push the envelope. But, there are many sanctity of life needs we can address. The purpose of this letter is to ask you to cooperate with APLC this year in identifying the three bills to be supported and to avoid other bills which would detract from our efforts. Physician, hospital and other groups have approved these bills. DHR has an unjustified problem with the third bill. These bills are not ones that we expect would be litigated:

1. **Assisted Suicide Ban Act** – This covers life at the other end of the life spectrum. There are efforts underway to legalize suicide in all states.
2. **Healthcare Rights of Conscience Act** – This bill protects doctors, nurses, *etcetera*, from having to perform services related to abortion, embryonic stem cell research, human cloning and sterilization.
3. **Alabama Child Placing Agency Inclusion Act** – There are many church and ministry operated child placing agencies in Alabama. They must be licensed by DHR. This bill provides that they cannot be denied a license or penalized for refusing to make a same sex marriage placement in violation of their religious beliefs. Adoption is a necessary alternative to abortion.

If both pro-life legislators and the pro-life community can agree on the bills to be introduced, it will save the Legislature a great deal of time and will result in the passage of enforceable laws. However, if we are distracted with the filing of other bills, this will result in desirable bills not being passed. We request your trust and cooperation with that.

When the Democrats were in control of the Alabama Legislature, it was extremely difficult to pass sanctity of life bills, but from time to time important ones were, such as the Women’s Right to Know Act. In those days, because leadership did not favor sanctity of life bills, the pro-life community worked closely with individual legislators to get those bills through the process. You know better than we how difficult it is to pass a bill.

However, when the Republican leadership took over, many legislators wished to sponsor pro-life bills. Leadership did not object. As a result, we have bills being filed by pro-life legislators that are not a part of an agreed upon and careful strategy to reach an end result. It is important that we use the strategy from the old days by all of us agreeing on what bills we will push and then considering no others.

You will be tempted to introduce other bills by well meaning or disagreeable and uninformed persons. If those bills are good bills, they can be considered in the next and successive legislative sessions. We wish to go to the Senate and House leadership with an understanding that we will not waste the Legislature’s time and resources with various and sundry pro-life bills. By working together, we can pass very good bills that will protect life.

We invite your comment back. I am glad to talk with you at anytime, in person or by telephone. We would appreciate a response from you that you understand what we are requesting and will work with us. That will give us confidence in our efforts. Thank you very much for your time. Please let me hear from you. Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston