

March 2018

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Since the Alabama Legislature is concentrating its session into about three months, it has not effectively been able to handle a number of what we might call discretionary bills. For example, the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition had planned on three bills plus a resolution recognizing pregnancy care centers. APLC will only be able to move one of those bills, HB52, Representative Kerry Rich's bill to require refund of abortion fees paid in advance, if the woman changes her mind. APLC should also be able to get the resolution.

The daycare bill, HB76, has still been a thorn in everyone's sides. Last year, it was very contentious and there was little cooperation from those who wanted to license church daycares. While that bill died, it came back to life this session. We have been able to work the compromise necessary for the bill and the protection of churches, although we are getting opposition from some of our allies. This month's Educational Update addresses it in some detail. When there is a final outcome, we will explain what happened and if it passes, what the law does. For now, we need support for this compromise bill, without any amendments.

Another bill of concern is SB213. This is a bill supported by a number of conservative organizations which are concerned with "property rights." Civil forfeiture has been abused in some ways. It permits law enforcement to take a person's real or personal property in certain situations, but without a conviction of a crime. The goal of those supporting this bill is laudable, but this bill does not need to pass and needs to be restructured. The primary reason is that in Alabama, civil forfeiture is a valuable tool in stopping unlawful gambling and in promoting rehabilitation of some drug offenders through drug court. What we might call non-criminal drug offenders, that is not pushers, but many youth and adults caught up in addiction, get a chance to rehabilitate their lives without a criminal record. If we remove civil forfeiture altogether, both of these important areas will lose their effectiveness and we will see gamblers getting away with mere misdemeanor offenses and non-criminal drug offenders going to prison. We are hopeful this bill will come back next year with a better structure.

Passing laws through the legislative process is a tedious and uncertain process. The goal is not to simply pass a bill. It is important that we pass a "law" that is intelligible, capable of proper enforcement and serves a public purpose. It requires advocates of both sides of the process to come together. It requires a great deal of effort by those who have an interest in the process so that the citizens will benefit from it. We need this for both the daycare and civil forfeiture bills. Please pray for our efforts in these regards.

We are also grateful for your financial support. With personal regards, I am,

Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston