

January 2021

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We still have uncertainty about the beginning of the 2021 regular session of the Alabama Legislature. The size of the rooms and the hallways are not conducive to social distancing. While social distancing might be possible some of the time, the ability to speak with legislators is materially compromised. Though the term “lobbyist” has a negative connotation, in reality, those with special knowledge of issues are the best way to inform legislators about an issue and prospective legislation. Of course, there are competing ideas on most issues, but that is the nature of the process. That process is impaired due to Covid.

There have been suggestions about delaying the session until later in the year when, presumably, vaccines will be more widely available and those who take them will contribute to the suppression of the virus. Or, the legislature would consider only necessary legislation and avoid contentious subjects. For us that would be gambling or legalizing marijuana, while for others, it would include the prohibition of transgender medical procedures on minors or pro-life bills. Of course, there is always a plethora of bills introduced and for many it may be difficult to predict what may cause opposition.

In the House over 85 bills have been pre-filed. In the Senate over 13 bills have been pre-filed. These include many bills that are contentious, as mentioned above. Just because a bill is filed does not mean it will move through the process. For now, it seems legislators are proceeding as if there will not be Covid issues.

So, going into the new year, there is a great deal of uncertainty. Development on individual rights due to Covid restrictions will continue. We address some of those in this month’s Educational Update.

The year 2020 was historically exceptional. It may be a harbinger of things to come. We expect new challenges, particularly on religion and life issues from the Biden Administration. We look forward to your support of SLI through the coming year.

Yours very truly,

A. Eric Johnston