

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

To: Interested Persons
Date: December 2021
From: A. Eric Johnston
Re: The Year Ahead

This past year has been extraordinarily difficult and contentious. The pandemic in many ways worked as a catalyst for political unrest and government overreach. The fallout from Covid and the tragedy of death has given the federal government and the Biden Administration an excuse to expand and deny citizens many rights. Once it has taken them, it will not give them back.

We have seen the church, as an institution and one of the three pillars of culture, failing in many ways in its mission. The Pope has focused on the environment, but failed to admonish politicians who support abortion, permitting them to receive Holy Communion. The Southern Baptist Church is dealing with sexual abuse, while the Presbyterian Church in America is refusing to judge homosexuality. As always, with mainline denominations, anything goes. This is not meant as an indictment of local churches and pastors, most of whom are faithful to God's Word.

The separation of Church and State is not an American Constitution principle. It is found in the Russian Constitution. In recent times, pastors have practiced it, however. This is understandable for positions on candidates and some issues, due to valid differences of opinions of church members. But on issues that clearly violate scripture, "something ought to be said," to quote Rev. E.V. Hill at the Religious Right's Convention in Dallas, Texas in 1992.

This is particularly true now with the Biden Administration. No matter what you may think of Donald Trump's speech patterns, his policies and those who served his administration did more for religious freedom than any president in modern history. Where he protected Little Sisters of the Poor, Biden's office of civil rights has directed HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, to limit religious freedom. Becerra opposed sanctity of life efforts in California while he was Attorney General there. He sued Little Sisters of the Poor, Catholic Nuns, attempting to require them to provide contraceptives and abortifacients to their employees.

Biden issued an executive order that the definition of "sex" from the *Bostock v. Clayton County* case (see August 2020 Educational Update), meaning gay, transgender, etc., be applied by all federal agencies, including the military. His orders are to diminish the Federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which is meant to protect religious freedom on the federal level. Biden supports abandonment of the Hyde Amendment, thereby committing federal funds to be used to provide abortions. The most significant and far reaching of his executive acts has been to require OSHA to disregard the 10th Amendment which protects states' rights to handle health care issues, and further violating the religious rights of persons to be exempt from certain healthcare procedures. We receive calls almost daily from persons who are losing their jobs for refusing to be vaccinated on religious grounds. We hope and expect the pending lawsuits around the country to enjoin Biden's unconstitutional orders.

Religious liberty is under a greater threat than at anytime in U.S. history. In the 1980's, the groups we know today as First Liberty, Alliance Defending Freedom, Liberty Counsel, Southeast Law Institute and others formed to restore strength to the Free Exercise Clause. It had been weakened by successive SCOTUS opinions making virtually any religious activity in the public square a violation of the Establishment Clause. The Biden Administration has extreme hostility to any religious belief or activity that holds to traditional Judeo/Christian values, primarily LGBTQ + and sanctity of life issues. We cannot underestimate the power of the presidency.

These demonstrate all the more the need for our commitment to religious freedom. Our rights must be protected. The truth of Christianity, paradoxically, guarantees religious freedom for all. But, the church must hold fast.

SLI is committed to this work. We look forward to 2022 to advise, represent and help without charge. We represent individuals, churches and ministries, along with providing counsel to conservative political groups who work on the issues of religious freedom, parental rights, public and nonpublic schools and sanctity of life. We will continue to provide guidance on vaccination issues. We will work with others to pass state laws against mandates. We are planning a strategy on these issues for the 2022 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature. We will work with conservative dedicated public servants to hold that "representative" body accountable to its people.

The threats are real and to paraphrase Frances Schaeffer, we must not allow our personal peace and affluence to blind us to what is happening. SLI does not address economic issues, but we see we are moving socialistically to being a third world culture thanks to the Biden administration. Overreach of government will result in loss of the freedoms for which we stand. We have much for which to be thankful. With support of all the organizations who stand for proper values, and those who prayerfully and financially support them, we look forward to a blessed and prosperous new year.