

**AN EDUCATIONAL MEMO FROM
THE SOUTHEAST LAW INSTITUTE**

To: Southeast Law Institute Supporters
From: A. Eric Johnston
Date: February, 2000
Re: Year 2000 Alabama Legislative Agenda

There are a number of issues on which SLI is rendering assistance or monitoring. Our memo this month is a legislative update.

I. PRO-LIFE BILLS

1. Woman's Right to Know – Also known as the “Informed Consent” bill, this legislation would require abortion clinics to provide complete, objective and medically proper information to pregnant women who are considering an abortion. This specifically includes color pictures at various gestational ages and requires an offering to show the expectant mother an ultrasound of her baby. Clinics would be required to provide referral information to adoption agencies and other helps. Numbers and Sponsors: S-228 (Bobby Denton) & H-339 (Blaine Galliher).
2. Amendment to the Parental Consent Law – In 1988 Alabama enacted a law which requires a minor girl to get at least one parent's consent to have an abortion or otherwise get judicial permission. While drafted in compliance with then existing law, this law has since proven to have loopholes, including insufficient protection against forgery of parent's signatures. This is remedied by required certified and official proof of parentage and other protective measures. Also, it will permit the State Attorney General to participate in any judicial by-pass proceeding on behalf of the unborn child and the court may appoint a *guardian ad litem* for the unborn child, all in conformity with the State's public policy of protecting life. Numbers and Sponsors: S-229 (Bobby Denton) & H-270 (Mary Sue McClurkin).
3. Assisted Suicide Prohibition – This bill would make it a crime to assist someone to commit suicide. Numbers and Sponsors: S-8 (Roger Bedford) & H-75 (Richard Laird).

II. GAMBLING LEGISLATION

1. Amendment to Prohibit Gambling Expansion – Each year the Alabama Legislature spends a significant amount of time dealing with gambling legislation. While the lottery was proposed to help education, all other gambling legislation helps only private gambling interests to the detriment of the family. This bill proposes that the voters be allowed to vote on a Constitutional Amendment which would prohibit all types of gambling, whether conducted by chance or skill, permitting only the four dog tracks and twelve bingo laws to remain in effect, but without any change except to possibly repeal those laws.
2. Electronic Gambling – Sometimes known as “video poker” there are four local bills, viz., Jefferson, Mobile, Greene and Macon Counties, proposing electronic gambling at those sites. This would turn those tracks into virtually casino-type operations permitting all sort of “skill-based” gambling.

III. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LEGISLATION

1. Changes to the Alabama Constitution – There has been much discussion about the need to rewrite the Alabama Constitution. One proposal may be to rewrite it one part at a time, possibly beginning with Alabama's Bill of Rights. Only two years ago Alabama passed the Religious Freedom Amendment which protects the free exercise of religion. Rewriting the Alabama Constitution must be done with extreme caution in order to preserve fundamental rights.
2. Other – There are always several bills which could have either a positive or adverse effect on religious freedom. There is at least one possible bill that would be significant and very positive; it has not been introduced yet. SLI is monitoring those bills and assisting in some instances. We will update you when possible.

IV. CONCLUSION

If you need further information on any of this legislation, please let us know and we will provide it to you. Also, we can refer you to persons or organizations who are involved in the legislative process.

SLI has drafted or assisted in the drafting of the above legislation. We will provide legal assistance to elected officials, testimony in legislative hearings, and review of amendments or substitute legislation. Our goal is to protect religious freedom, the sanctity of life, and keep our basic liberties in the proper perspective. SLI does not spend funds on lobbying. Our assistance is based on a proper interpretation and application of constitutional and legal principles.

This statement is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to provide legal advice. We hope if you have questions or know of those who do, you will contact us and we can assist through referral to one of our cooperating attorneys.