

APLC

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MEMORANDUM

VIA Email Only

TO: Members, Alabama Pro-Life Coalition

FROM: A. Eric Johnston

DATE: May 5, 2017

RE: 2017 Legislative Regular Session

Our strategy has paid off 100%. Last fall, we agreed to ask legislators to sponsor bills that we recommended and not to lose focus by permitting emphasis to be given to bills not recommended by us. Our hope was that by concentrating our attention on three bills alone, we could get all of them passed.

Leadership agreed to our proposal. Both the House and the Senate included two or more of our bills in their respective agendas.

We received cooperation from leadership throughout the legislative process. There were at least three suggestions by legislators that they wanted to push other legislation, in addition to what we were requesting. I persuaded them not to do so and they reluctantly agreed. It is encouraging that members want to pursue a pro-life agenda, but it is important that we work together.

The bills we selected were:

HB95 (Mooney)/SB185 (Sanford) – Healthcare Rights of Conscience Act

HB96 (Butler)/SB198 (Williams) – Assisted Suicide Ban Act

HB24 (Wingo)/SB165 (Hightower) – The Alabama Child Placing Inclusion Act

In addition, there were two other bills that we did not oppose but that were pursued as either part of the House agenda or of necessity by the Attorney General's Office. HB98 (Fridy) is an amendment to the Alabama Constitution recognizing the sanctity of life. It has no substantive or operative provisions. This bill passed, but is not required to be signed by the Governor since it is a constitutional amendment. The other bill, HB539 (Hill)/SB376 (Waggoner) was an amendment to the parental consent law. This bill was requested by the Attorney General's Office and was related to a pending lawsuit where the AG thought an adjustment to the law may be helpful. At this time, that bill has not passed but there is still time.

While public hearings were called on all bills, there was no real opposition to any but the Inclusion bill. It activated opposition from both the abortion community and the LGBTQ community, with the latter carrying much of the opposition against the bill. In fact, the Human Rights Campaign and we are told Google, AT&T and Apple all brought pressure on the Governor to append an executive amendment to the bill. The amendment may have confused the bill in later application, but we were more concerned that because it would need to go back to both legislative chambers for concurrence, it could delay the bill and it not pass.

Another factor in our agenda was that we wanted bills that would be constitutional and serve some good and necessary purpose. These bills do exactly that. The question of constitutionality came up in the Senate Health Committee, but we assured the committee that our belief was these bills are all constitutional.

I believe everyone is familiar with the content of the bills, so I will not detail them. If you have any questions about any of the bills and how they may operate, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Please express your thanks to each of the bills' sponsors and to Governor Kay Ivey. Particularly, Governor Ivey needs our gratitude because of the publicity surrounding the Inclusion bill.

Many people participated in the effort this year to make it a success. One of the most notable successes was the pro-life day in the House. The House pro-life day was perhaps more significant because it was the first effort and it was set aside as such so that supporters of the sanctity of life could participate. Many contributed to that effort. Rather than have the event as a rally outside, rooms were reserved on the sixth floor and tables set up for refreshments and pro-life merchandise. Members of the House frequently visited us there. The House leadership was very appreciative of that support.

The Senate did not have a pro-life day, as such. The Inclusion bill came up on a day separate than the other two bills. Nevertheless, an event was held again on the sixth floor on the day two of the bills came up in the Senate and it also was a success.

We were active on social media this year. That was very important to call attention to the bills. The real significance may have been, however, that it let legislators know about the support and that they were doing the right thing. Last year, there were complaints by them of

social media criticism without any response from the pro-life community. We appreciate everyone who participated in those communications this year.

I want to thank everyone for your participation. Many served in many ways for over these several months. I will not attempt to list all the names for fear of omitting someone. But on behalf of the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition, thank you to everyone who participated in our effort.

We will look forward to next year. We will consider an agenda and once again ask leadership to participate with us. There is no guarantee they will. However, we hope this year will serve as an encouraging template to all who are involved.

Finally, we give thanks to the Lord. “A man’s heart devises his way: but the Lord directeth his steps.” Proverbs 16:9. We made our plan, but we did not have the power to make it work. Also, there were many in authority with whom we needed cooperation. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he will.” Proverbs 21:1. There were many instances throughout the process, as there always are, where we see the hand of the Lord at work. We are grateful for His presence with us.

AEJ/pmm