



## Your Voice at the Capitol

The 2024 Alabama Legislative Session is now history. Our Executive Director, Becky Gerritson, was there each day the legislature was in session as well for Wednesday committee meetings. Other members volunteered their efforts to help with lobbying for our issues and playing defense against legislation we could not support. Our Action Groups helped with calls to legislators as well as coming to the Capitol.



We started the session with a large list of priority bills and also supported others. Some of those were clear victories. Others did not fair as well.

Our Priority List consisted of 11 bills. The fate of each is explained below:

- **Women’s Bill of Rights**, sponsored by Rep. Dubose. This bill defines a woman based upon the biological definition and ensures that women’s private spaces like locker rooms, bathrooms, shelters, etc. are reserved for biological women. This

*EF Executive Director, Becky Gerritson testifies regarding the Abstinence Act*

bill passed the House and Senate committees and was on the daily calendar to be voted on during the last day of the session. It **failed** to come to the floor due to the last minute battle over the failed gambling bills.

- **Children’s Device Protection Act** sponsored by Rep. Sells. This would help prevent accidental exposure by children to pornography on cell phones and tablets by requiring that cell phones and tablets for children activated in Alabama automatically have the pornography filter to be toggled to the “on” position. This bill suffered the same fate as the Women’s Bill of Rights and **failed** to come to the Senate floor on the last day of the session.
- **Harmful to Minors Act** sponsored by Rep. Mooney. This bill would have amended the current obscenity laws regarding sexually explicit material and activities where minors are present. As above, this bill **failed** to be voted on by the Senate on the last day of the session.
- **Universal School Choice. A win!** This bill was presented by the Governor’s Office and passed with ease. We were disappointed that our bill, the PRICE Act, did not pass last year, but we applaud the passage of this bill as a good first start in the important need for parents to be empowered to educate their children according to their values. We will continue to work to ensure that private schools and homeschools are protected from government control or interference.

*Continued on page 2*

- **Transparency In Education. Another win!** We applaud passage of this bill which empowers parents in public schools to review curricula and resources used in their children's classrooms and allows them to choose whether or not their child should participate in certain lessons that go against the parent's values.
- **Banning CRT/DEI from K-12 schools and government agencies** sponsored by Reps. Dubose and Oliver **Another win!** This bill prohibits the tenants of CRT/DEI from being taught in schools to minors and for agencies to promote and practice such programs within the agencies. Such programs breed racism and divide us as Americans rather than promoting unity in our society.
- **Ban Debanking bill** Debanking is the process where a bank can close or freeze a customer's account because the bank's policies or moral viewpoint are in conflict with the customer's views. While a bill regarding this **did not get filed this year**, we support such a bill and will work to get this passed next year.
- **Gold and Silver as Legal Tender** The bill **was not introduced** during this session, but we expect it to be introduced next session. The U. S. Constitution allows states to use gold and silver as legal tender rather than only the fiat U. S. Dollar. The legislature did pass a bill removing capital gains taxes from the sale of gold, silver and other precious metals. This is a good first step for making gold and silver legal tender in Alabama. It would provide Alabamians some protection against inflation, federal control, and The Great Reset while helping preserve our personal liberty and privacy.
- **Keep Gambling Out of Alabama. Big Win!** We lobbied hard and prayed hard against the gambling bills that were introduced. Passage was a priority of the House leadership and a very comprehensive bill easily passed the House. This bill would have provided a state run lottery, expanded casino gambling and authorized electronic sports betting which would have made every cell phone and tablet capable of being a casino. The Senate passed a much watered down gambling bill, providing for only a lottery and the existing casinos. The House voted to non-concur with the Senate bill, so the issue went to a House/ Senate conference committee. The conference report was then passed by the House, but failed by one vote in the Senate. We are very grateful for that one vote, even though one of the NO votes was based upon the fact that this version did not allow for expansion of Poarch Creek Indian casinos.
- **Support Defunding the World Health Organization. Win!** The WHO wants to transition from an advisory agency to an international governing body on health issues with the WHO being able to dictate what a health issue is. This could range from a viral infection to global warming. Federal legislation is needed to stop the U. S. from signing onto this WHO change. The Alabama Legislature passed a strong resolution provided by Eagle Forum and others urging the Alabama Congressional delegation to support defunding the WHO.
- **Amending the Alabama Textbook Law (not introduced) and the Abstinence Act.** These bills would increase transparency in education by citizens who need more time to review and make public comments about proposed textbooks before the State Board of Education votes to approve the textbooks that have been proposed.
- **Alabama Abstinence Act revisions bill died in the Senate on the last day.** Updates to the Alabama Abstinence Act are needed to ensure students are protected from obscene materials used in sexual health classes.

These were our original priority bills for this past session. We watched and supported or opposed many other bills. With the number of bills introduced each session, we work to support or oppose those that most affect Alabama families and children. We are thankful for all our supporters and continue to work for the good of Alabama.

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## *What's Good About America?*

By Rev. John Killian, Special Contributor

### **America the Beautiful**

Generations have thrilled at the patriotic chords expressed in the tune America the Beautiful. This tune, while commonly known as a patriotic hymn, has been popularized by Ray Charles. The song actually reached its peak as a popular song in 1976 when Charlie Rich's version reached number 22 on the Hot Country Songs chart.

The tune originated in 1883 when Episcopal choirmaster Samuel A. Ward wrote it to accompany a poem *O Mother dear, Jerusalem*. However, Katharine Bates, an English Professor at Wellesley College made a trip to Colorado and wrote the first verse to the tune Pikes Peak in awe of the majestic mountains. Neither Bates nor Ward ever met and did not collaborate in the writing of the song. Nonetheless, the hand of God rested on the song America the Beautiful and the song has become a staple in celebration of our country's heritage.



*Katharine Lee Bates*

President John F. Kennedy initiated elevating America the Beautiful to legal status equal to the National Anthem. However, this effort failed, but the effort itself does give evidence to the place of America the Beautiful in the heritage of our land.

Granted, the impetus of this song speaks of the beauty of our land. God has blessed our land with natural resources unmatched by any other country. Our economy has prospered due to the abundance of natural resources in our land. The phrase "sea to shining sea" is a plain reference to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, which draw the borders of our wonderful country.

But the crescendo of this song comes at the line, perhaps most quoted of the song, "America, America, God shed His grace on thee." Millions of Americans regularly hear the testimony that our all-sovereign God exists and that our God has granted grace upon this land, in that His mighty plan is able to function, as God has personally directed His power to enable our land to operate.

Consider that our country has been instrumental in the destruction of the Third Reich, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and in spreading prosperity across the world. The world is a better place because of the direction of God in establishing this great land and because of the mighty blessing implemented by God's sovereign grace.

Yes, God has shed His mighty grace on this great country. May our daily prayer be that God would crown our good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

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## **AG Marshall leads Lawsuit Against Title IX Changes**

Alabama AG Steve Marshall has taken the lead on a lawsuit against the Biden Administration. This time it is against the U. S. Dept of Education which issued the change prohibiting sex-based education discrimination by adding gender identity and sexual orientation to the list of federally protected groups. This would abolish the distinction between male and female sports and do away with female only sports, locker rooms and bathrooms.

Marshall said that Alabama parents do not share the Biden Administration's goal of genderlessness in our schools and have supported laws that protect girls sports and girls' bathrooms. Such rules by administrative departments go beyond what is authorized by Congress in the laws that are passed. We applaud AG Marshall for leading this charge to protect our society.

*Source: 1819 News 04/30/2024*

A study published in the 1990's indicated that classical music showed a significant improvement in special IQ scores. Since then scientists have used Mozart and other classical music to show that listening to classical music leads to higher school grades and stronger spatial reasoning skills. In other words, the Mozart effect truly exists and enhances cognitive ability and is used to treat brain disorders such as epilepsy or Parkinson's disease. Yes; brain function can be affected by classical music.

A study published in 2023 indicated that Mozart's Sonatas K448 and K545 have remained the only anti-epileptic music selections that have been verified by repeated experiments. Thus they are called the Mozart effect.

Source: *Epoch Health*, 5-7-2024

OpenTheBooks.com, the largest database of Federal, State, and Local government spending, reported that Gil Cisneros, then Under Secretary for Military Readiness, announced in Congressional hearing last spring that the Department of Defense was closing its Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for DOD K-12 schools. Instead, the program has been imbedded into the lesson plans and classrooms throughout the entire DOD system. The Pentagon, under Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, is preventing details of the DEI Policies from coming to light by abusing the Freedom of Information Act. They bamboozled the public and Congress while forcing this woke extremism on roughly 70,000 DOD children.

Source: *OpenTheBooks.com*

On April 18, 2024, 1819 News reported that the Alabama Certificate of Need board denied South Baldwin Regional Medical Center's plans for a freestanding emergency department in Loxley, Alabama. This town of over 4,400 people said that there are few medical options nearby, but Gulf States Hospitals and Mobile Infirmary contested the request to the CON. The CON was established in 1974 supposedly as a cost saving measure which has not worked, but is often used to restrict competition in the health care field. During the 1980's the states were no longer required to have a CON board and 18 states have dropped CON requirements freeing the medical community to operate based on free enterprise principals and competition. Alabama's current CON structure allows the state government to choose winners and losers and favors long-established healthcare providers over new companies and innovations looking to enter the state's market.

<https://alabamapolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023->

John Lott, President of the Crime Prevention Research Center, recently wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that, no matter what the media says, crime is up and the public is alarmed about it and rightly so. Lott says, "The decline in reported crimes is a function of less reporting, not less crime." Even as the FBI reports that crime is down, more Americans say they have been victims of violent crime and property crimes.

*The Daily Signal*, 5 14 24

"Truth is beautiful, without doubt; but so are lies."

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

"Courage is the price that Life exacts for granting peace"

*Amelia Earhart*

"Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting."

*William Arthur Ward*

"The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously."

*Henry Kissinger*

"The fairest thing in nature, a flower, still has its roots in earth"

*D. H. Lawrence*

"There's a lot of blood, sweat and guts between dreams and success."

*Paul "Bear" Bryant*

"To feel valued, to know, even if only once in a while, that you can do a job well is an absolutely marvelous feeling."

*Barbara Walters*

"The future doesn't belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave."

*Ronald Reagan*

"To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often."

*Winston Churchill*

The above quotes are from various issues of The Epoch Times Morning Brief

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# Jasper Eagle Forum Action Group

Never, Ever Give Up!

By Iva Hendon

The Jasper Action Group began in the spring of 2021. They have been blessed by the involvement of June and Ken Collins in supporting meetings and community endeavors who have, over time, stepped into leadership roles: June serves as the AG leader, not only leading the meetings but also creating graphics and flyers used to promote the group, and Ken has been invaluable in maintaining AG membership contact information and incorporating this into the Alabama Eagle Forum Voter Voice system.



Their steering committee is made up of several dedicated members: Barbara Alfsen who has coordinated the details of the monthly community meetings, Susan Stephens and Rachel Williams have served as outreach coordinators alerting citizens to action opportunities and future events; Jessica Johnson and Donna and Joe McClusky have been steady supporters and provide a conduit to the local Republican group.

The Jasper group has anywhere from 10-25 attendees at the regular monthly meetings. Like most of the Action Groups across the state, they just accept the ebb and flow of attendees and pray for meaningful connections at each meeting, regardless of numbers.

The group's most consuming and noteworthy effort over the past year and a half has been the struggle to keep Jasper free of marijuana dispensaries. When they found out in January of 2023 that the city council had quietly voted to opt in to marijuana dispensaries for Jasper without a prior public hearing, the Jasper Action Group quickly began a long process of trying to notify and educate the public, local pastors, and city leaders of the profound and negative impact of marijuana dispensaries, and rallying citizens to ask council members to rescind the opt-in vote. This led to forming a Concerned Citizens group in Jasper coordinated by the EF Action Group members. They have slowly pulled some of the Concerned Citizens into the EF Action Group, though they have been careful to keep a low profile in the dispensary effort in order for the movement to be more organic and less of an EF organization effort in the eyes of our city leadership. Some of the work the EF group has done along with the Concerned Citizens group on this issue include:

- Hosted a public meeting at the library, zooming in Christine Carr, a CRNA and Eagle Forum board member who is an expert on the marijuana issue.
- Held meetings with the city council, zooming in Christine Carr to share research and Sharman Brooks, a zoning expert from Shelby County, to explain how Shelby County has used zoning regulations to discourage the marijuana growing and processing industry there.
- Met with the mayor and each council member.
- Sent regular updates to the group of Concerned Citizens that was steadily growing.
- Conducted a petition drive in local churches gathering 250 signatures on petitions asking council members to rescind the dispensary vote and presented a copy of these signatures to the council.
- Attended council work sessions and public meetings to continue to stay informed on their agenda regarding marijuana.

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*Jasper continued from page 5*

- Made public a conflict of interest between the city attorney who was advising the council and his ties to the marijuana processing group that received a state license to operate inside the Jasper city limits.
- Six members of the Concerned Citizens group filed formal ethics complaints with the State Ethics Commission, This complaint is still pending but it has resulted in the city attorney withdrawing as the attorney for the cannabis processing group.
- Rallied enough citizens at a public council meeting to fill the courtroom to standing room only, and when the police chief judged that more people would violate the building fire code, the entrance was blocked and 40 plus citizens listened in the hallway outside the meeting room. ABC 33/40 covered the meeting, further enlightening the public.
- Got the Jasper zoning regulations changed to restrict marijuana activities.
- Next, the marijuana producers petitioned for rezoning the property in question. After concerned citizens made passionate pleas not to rezone the property in question, the motion to rezone was made, but did not get a second and the motion died. The group felt they had watched God move in an astonishing way!
- The battle to protect Jasper from marijuana interests continues, but the EF Action Group will continue to work, since the marijuana group has now gone to the county commission to de-annex the property in question from Jasper to the county.
- The Jasper Action Group is committed to never, ever giving up and will be meeting soon with their county commission members.



*Public meeting in Jasper about marijuana issue*

The Jasper EF Action Group has been the backbone of the Concerned Citizens group and has organized and encouraged their efforts. Iva Hendon, Director of our Alabama Eagle Forum Action Groups, and a member of the Jasper group said, “It has been so humbling and gratifying to see the fruits of our labors. We have forged new friendships that have crossed racial as well as denominational lines, and whatever comes of our efforts, it can never diminish the pleasure of seeing this grassroots movement spread in our city!”

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## Big Win for Alabama in Library Controversy

As we covered in our last newsletter, parents, beginning in Prattville, AL have been working to relocate sexually inappropriate books from children's sections to adult areas of our public libraries. The movement started in Prattville with the group Clean Up Prattville and quickly expanded to a statewide effort called Clean Up Alabama. Governor Ivey got involved and issued a set of guidelines for consideration by the Board of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS), the statewide group that serves local libraries.



The APLS board met Thursday, May 16, 2024, to vote on the proposed rules after a lengthy 90-day public comment period that garnered over 6,475 letters from citizens giving their opinions on the proposed changes to the Board's Administrative Code. Most of the letters, both in support and opposition, said that Ivey's recommendations were too vague. Eagle Forum gathered many of those letters from concerned citizens promoting approval of the rule changes and worked with other groups and the public to get letters sent in asking for the proposed rules to be passed to protect the children and youth of Alabama.

*Books shown at APLS Board meeting May 16, 2024 From 1819 News 5/17/24*

During discussion on the proposal, APLS board member and Alabama GOP Chairman John Wahl proposed amendments to Ivey's recommendation, which he says stemmed from observations made during the public comment period. Wahl said the amendments did not diminish Ivey's recommendations; instead, they would add specificity so librarians know what is expected of them. As reported by 1819 News on May 17, 2024, Wahl's amendments place several requirements on libraries contingent on their continued funding.

- Create policies governing the selection criteria for minors and how they are safeguarded from sexually explicit or other material deemed inappropriate for children or youth.
- Approve written guidelines that ensure library sections designated for minors under the age of 18 remain free of material containing obscenity, sexually explicit or other material deemed inappropriate for children or youth. Age-appropriate materials regarding history, religion, biology, or human anatomy should not be construed to be against this rule.
- Approve written selection criteria for minors that prevent the purchase or otherwise acquiring of any material advertised for consumers under the age of 18 that contains obscenity, sexually explicit, or other material deemed inappropriate for children or youth. Age-appropriate materials regarding history, religion, biology, or human anatomy should not be construed to be against this rule.
- Approve written guidelines that establish library cards for minors under the age of 18 must require parental approval before a minor's card is permitted to checkout materials.

The amendments and the rule changes both passed with only the Board Chair, Ron Snider, voting no. He stated that he did not want the Board involved in litigation.

As expected, the opposition group, Read Freely Alabama, strongly opposed the rules changes. They are the group that has filed a federal lawsuit against the Autauga-Prattville Library for their rule changes that are similar to those passed by the APLS Board. Stay tuned for updates on this!

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