

Texas Legislative Update March 8-15, 2021

National Issues

“With last week’s introduction in Congress of the misleadingly named Civics Secures Democracy Act, we are headed toward an epic clash over the spread of uber-controversial pedagogies — Critical Race Theory and Action Civics — to America’s classrooms. I don’t know whether the country will wake up to the danger of this legislation before or after it passes. Sooner or later, however, the truth will out. When it does, the culture war will have merged with K–12 education-policy disputes to a degree never before seen.”

Read more here:

nationalreview.com

heritage.org

ACTION: Please call Senator John Cornyn’s office or email (512-469-6034 - ornyn.senate.gov/contact)

Texas Issues

Calls and emails to our legislators are making a difference! For example, HB 3 that was mentioned in the last legislative update (which grants sweeping new pandemic emergency authority to the governor and creates narrow liability protection for Texas businesses, including placing Texas businesses under federal/CDC, state, and local guidelines), had a March 11th public hearing and they have heard from Texans in large numbers their disagreement with this bill! It has put the pressure on them to address the problems in the bill. We must continue to hold our representatives accountable.

Mental Health and Parental Rights: (information below from a coalition partner)

On Tuesday, March 16th, Texas House Public Education will consider HB759. On the same day, the committee will consider HB1114, establishing school mental health clinics for students and their families. It also adds more mental health professionals to school health advisory committees.

There were already severe issues last session with what schools were determining as mental health. We know that in Austin ISD alone, the school was calling CPS at an alarming rate for what they deemed were mental health problems. And the evaluations and assessments have been concerning as well.

House Bill 759 expands on last session’s controversial Senate Bill 11 creating a database of children who a school threat assessment team considers may be a danger to self or others. You can see the language here: capitol.texas.gov

This database is non-public, “confidential” and the bill creates a criminal penalty for the release of this “confidential” information to anyone not entitled to the information. Are parents allowed to see the dossier that is being compiled on their child? We do not know.

The Florida legislature passed a Threat Assessment Database bill in response to the Parkland shooting. It was controversial and has been opposed by a number of parents, disability rights and privacy groups. edweek.org
orlandosentinel.com

Many schools are now using powerful digital surveillance tools that capture not only social media data, but even homework, creative writing assignments, or pretty much anything else stored on their school cloud account. You can read about this here: buzzfeednews.com and here cchrtexas.org

Some of these companies claim to use “machine learning” or AI to determine whether students are “depressed”, abusing substances, or otherwise dangerous.

How many kids identified as potentially depressed or dangerous really are? The Brennan Center for Justice reported that aside from the anecdotes produced by companies who produce these products, is no proof that social media monitoring systems work, and that these types of surveillance algorithms are susceptible to bias. Obviously, this could create a risk for minorities, students with disabilities and others. brennancenter.org

Below is the contact info for the committee members' offices.

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Harold Dutton, Chair | (512) 463-0510 |
| J.M. Lozano, Vice Chair | (512) 463-0463 |
| Alma Allen | (512) 463-0744 |
| Steve Allison | (512) 463-0686 |
| Keith Bell | (512) 463-0458 |
| Diego Bernal | (512) 463-0532 |
| Brad Buckley | (512) 463-0684 |
| Mary Gonzales | (512) 463-0613 |
| Dan Huberty | (512) 463-0520 |
| Ken King | (512) 463-0736 |
| Thresa "Terry" Meza | (512) 463-0641 |
| James Talarico | (512) 463-0670 |
| Gary VanDeaver | (512) 463-0692 |

ACTION: You can call or email House Public Ed members against these bills. Please consider making a written submission against each of these bills. The link is here: comments.house.texas.gov
Submissions are limited to 3000 characters, so you don't have to know everything.

Life: On Monday, March 15, 2021 there were seven important pro-life bills being heard in committee which some testifying support for and we will continue to monitor these bills and look for the House version of them as well.

Please remember to call your representatives and ask for their support of these bills as well.

1. SB 8 by Hughes Texas Heartbeat Act – Bans abortion on children who have a detectable heartbeat and other Pro-Life legal tools to stop abortion. View bill: capitol.texas.gov

2. SB 9 by Paxton Trigger Abortion Ban – Bans abortion in Texas whenever the Supreme Court overrules Roe v. Wade wholly or partly. View bill: capitol.texas.gov

3. SB 394 by Lucio Regulating Abortion-Inducing Drugs – Puts into Texas law FDA regulations on abortion-inducing drugs that have been or are expected to be repealed by the Biden administration.

View bill: capitol.texas.gov

4. SB 650 by Campbell Ban taxpayer-funded abortion "logistical support" - Follow up on SB 22 from last session since the city of Austin tried to go around it and fund transportation, court fees, other costs not directly paying for the abortion. View bill: capitol.texas.gov

5. SB 802 by Paxton Every Mother Matters Act (EMMA) – Requires pre-abortion counseling outside the abortion clinic. View bill: capitol.texas.gov

6. SB 1173 by Hancock Preborn NonDiscrimination Act (PreNDA) – Bans remaining late-term abortions & abortions motivated by the sex, race, or disability of the child as well as connecting families with perinatal palliative care if their child has a disability. View bill: capitol.texas.gov

7. SB 1647 by Perry Texas Abolition Strategy Omnibus Bill - Includes PreNDA, Heartbeat, complete ban on elective abortions, and other Pro-Life policies that go into effect at various dates. View bill: capitol.texas.gov

Gambling: HJR 133 by Rep John Kuempel and SJR 33 by Senator Carol Alvarado would legalize casino gambling and sports betting in Texas. The bills call for four Las Vegas-style casinos to be built in Austin, the DFW area, Houston, and San Antonio. Powerful lobbyists are behind the push to overturn the state's ban on gaming , including the Las Vegas Sands gambling empire that seeks to invest millions, possibly billions of dollars, into Texas. Both bills require a two-thirds vote of lawmakers, and if either bill passes the Legislature, Texas voters will have the final say in a Constitutional Amendment election in November. These bills have been assigned a committee, but not made it to a hearing yet so we will keep our eyes on it. Gambling (whether casino, sports or other) opens the door to addictions and crime.

Resources: Owen Strachan has a new book out that can be ordered from Christian Book Distributors called "Christianity and Wokeness, How the Social Justice Movement is Hijacking the Gospel and the Way to Stop It." And another important read is Ryan Anderson's, "When Harry Became Sally."

Patriot Academy - Biblical Citizenship Class A recurring class coach.patriotacademy.com. Along with knowing Jesus and his Word, an informed and educated church is important!