

Texas Legislative Update April 13-23, 2021

Voting: Local Elections in Texas for City Council and School Board races are upon us and are very important! Early voting for the May 1st election is April 19-April 27.

Please see here for info regarding candidates ivoterguide.com

Click here to find your polling location and where to vote: teamrv-mvp.sos.texas.gov

Your Christian guide to voting in city elections: christiansengaged.org

87th Texas Legislative Session: Please continue to pray and stay engaged in the session which ends May 31st. There is still much work to be done! A quick email or phone call can make all the difference. Bills left in committee after the end of April/beginning of May will have little chance of being passed.

Update On Gender Modification Bills

1. Senator Bob Hall's SB 1311 would protect children from receiving puberty-suppression drugs, cross-sex hormones, medical procedures or surgeries for the purpose of gender reassignment- this bill received a hearing and has passed out of the Senate State Affairs Committee, but now needs to be voted on the Senate floor.

Senator Hall says, " Every single child is created in the image of God. Altering a healthy, completely natural part of His creation in such a way is not only morally wrong, but also carries dire consequences. There are countless testimonies of adults who underwent transition procedures as children, but regret it now. Ranging from bone density problems to fertility issues, these are more than just side effects of a drug or procedure. They significantly decrease the quality of life for many individuals - forever. Also, the suicide rate for these surgical and drug victims is extremely high." Read more about how he is seeking to protect Texas children mailchi.mp/senatorbobhall/

2. Senator Charles Perry's SB1646 would also protect children from receiving puberty-suppression drugs, cross-sex hormones, medical procedures or surgeries for the purpose of gender reassignment – this bill had a hearing and passed out of the Senate State Affairs Committee, but now needs to be voted on the Senate floor.

See video testimony here for gender modification bills above starting at the 1:19:55 mark for both SB 1311 and SB 1646 - tlcsenate.granicus.com

ACTION: please contact Lt. Governor Dan Patrick: Phone: 512-463-0001 or email at tgov.texas.gov and ask his office to bring these two bills (SB 1311 & SB 1646) to a floor vote quickly while there is still time in the process to get to the House. Also, PLEASE email or call your senator and ask them to vote for these bills (SB 1311 & SB 1646) (find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home).

3. Representative Matt Krause's HB1399 relates to protecting children from the use of puberty blockers and gender transition surgeries by physicians and prohibits them from receiving liability insurance – this bill received a hearing and has passed out of the House Public Health committee, but now it must get to the House floor to be voted on.

You can watch the video testimony hearing here at the 7:39:07 mark: tlchouse.granicus.com

ACTION: Please call House Speaker Dade Phelan- Phone: 512-463-1000 or email at house.texas.gov and request that he help to get HB 1399 to the House floor immediately while there is still time to protect Texas children from gender reassignment procedures that will have lifelong severe consequences.

4. Representative Tom Oliverson HB1424 - Relating to a health care provider's right to object to participation in a medical procedure that violates the provider's ethical, moral, or religious beliefs – this bill received a hearing, but is still pending in the House Public Health Committee.

ACTION: Rep. Stephanie Klick is the Chair of this committee. Email her at stephanie.klick@house.texas.gov or call at 512-463-0599 and let her know how critical it is to pass HB 1424 out of committee so that medical professionals have their right of conscience protected regarding abortion and gender reassignment procedures.

See video testimony here at the 2:52:55 mark: tlchouse.granicus.com

Update On Parental Rights

1. Equal Parenting Bill HB 803 By Representative Mayes Middleton - Children need both a mother and a father in their lives as long as both parents are fit, willing, safe and able. Hearing Monday, April 27. For more information read here equaljusticetaskforce.com and capitol.texas.gov

ACTION: Please submit online written comments here - comments.house.texas.gov
You can also call or email each of the committee members to support this bill.

Chairwoman Victoria Neave 512-463-0244 • victoria.neave@house.texas.gov
Rep. Valoree Swanson 512-463-0572 • valoree.swanson@house.texas.gov
Rep. David Cook 512-463-0374 • david.cook@house.texas.gov
Rep. James Frank 512-463-0534 • james.frank@house.texas.gov
Rep. Jeff Leach 512-463-0544 • jeff.leach@house.texas.gov
Rep. Ana-Maria Ramos 512- 463-0454 • ana-maria.ramos@house.texas.gov
Rep. James Talarico 512-463-0670 • james.talarico@house.texas.gov
Rep Cody Thane Vasut 512- 463-0564
Rep. Gene Wu 512- 463-0492 • gene.wu@house.texas.gov

2. Sex-Ed:SB 1082 by Senator Donna Campbell - Relating to parental access to curriculum materials used in a public school's human sexuality instruction. This bill clarifies a parent's right to view sex ed curriculum materials and demands a greater level of transparency from our schools.

This bill had a hearing and was left pending in the Senate Education Committee.

ACTION: Please email or call Senator Larry Taylor, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, and ask him to pass this bill out of his committee – larry.taylor@senate.texas.gov, 512-463-0111

Update On Education

1. Rep. Valoree Swanson's HB1458 – Relating to the separation based on biological sex of athletics teams sponsored by a public school or institution of higher education. This bill has 77 House Representatives signed on to it. There is no reason why this bill should not receive a hearing and get passed by the House when over half the House supports it. Other states have banned biological males from female sports - nationalreview.com

ACTION: Please call or email House State Affairs Chairman Chris Paddie and let him know we need immediate action and a hearing for HB 1458 and there are 77 sponsors and co-sponsors on this bill. 512-463-0556, chris.paddie@house.texas.gov

2. Senator Bryan Hughes' SB442 - Relating to local school health advisory councils and health education provided by school districts, including requirements regarding human sexuality instruction. This bill would create changes to the Student Health Advisory Council, (SHAC), a committee that recommends health programming for local school districts that includes, alcohol abuse, drugs, vaping, sexting, human sexuality and other topics. Passed the Senate on April 15 and is now in the House Public Health Committee.

ACTION: Email or call Public Health Chairwoman Stephanie Klick and ask her to please pass SB 442 quickly while there is still time - (512) 463-0599, Stephanie.Klick@house.texas.gov

3. Sen. Charles Perry's SB 29 - Relating to requiring public school students to compete in interscholastic athletic competitions based on biological sex. Passed Senate on April 15 and received in the House Public Education Committee.

ACTION: Please call or email House Public Education Chairman Harold Dutton and let him know we need immediate action and support for SB 29 (Rep. Harold Dutton 512-463-0510, harold.dutton@house.texas.gov).

4. SB977 by Senator Bob Hall - Relating to defenses to prosecution for certain offenses involving material or conduct that may be obscene or is otherwise harmful to children.

ACTION: Please email or call Senator John Whitmire, Chair of Senate Criminal Justice and ask him to set a hearing ASAP to protect Texas children! (512) 463-0115, john.whitmire@senate.texas.gov

5. Mental Health Screenings: *SB980 (House companion bill HB 2954) Brings "Suicide Safer" Program (and/or other similar programs) to Elementary Schools - Invites Mental Health Screening and does not provide adequate Parental Rights.

SB 980 had a HEARING APRIL 20, SENATE PUBLIC EDUCATION and the House Companion bill HB 2954 may be voted on by the House soon.

ACTION: Please Call the members of the Senate Education Committee and urge them to vote no on SB980. Names and phone numbers are below. Also, please email or call your house representative and ask them to vote NO on these bills (HB 2954 and SB 980) -(find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home).

You can see the bill here: capitol.texas.gov

For more information about these two bills read here:

- The "Suicide Safer Schools" program includes directly asking children if they are suicidal.
 - The "Suicide Safer Schools" program includes mental health screening of "at risk" students.
 - The program reminds school personnel that counselors don't need parental consent to "counsel" a child for suicide prevention.
 - The program encourages school personnel to call CPS if parents don't agree with the treatment recommendations of the school. You can see all of that here: texassuicideprevention.org
 - The parental consent section of this bill is weak. These programs get around parental consent by using Texas Family Code Sec. 32.004, which says, a child may consent to counseling for suicide prevention and more.
1. Some schools already do suicide risk assessments on suspect youth prior to obtaining parental consent.
 2. They should not be allowed to do this because elementary school children, especially young ones, do not have the maturity to consent for counseling. The Suicide Safer Schools program also encourages counselors

to counsel (screen) first, inform parents later. It even has a helpful hint on what to tell parents if they are upset that you counseled their child without consent.

3. The Suicide Safer Schools program advises counselors to “explore” any religious or cultural concerns that reduce a parent’s acceptance of mental health treatment.
4. The Suicide Safer Schools program advises counselors to refer to Child Protective Services if they “refuse to obtain recommended mental health treatment in the community.”
5. Parents are in the best position to decide when young children are introduced to the subject of suicide, not schools. Most of us who have children try to shield them from inappropriate or disturbing content, whether it is language, sexual, or deals with violence or death. Most of us have probably struggled with whether a child is old enough to go to a funeral. By introducing the subject of suicide in elementary schools, this bill takes the decision out of parents’ hands.

Suicide is very rare in this age group. In 2019, the only groups with fewer suicides than age 5-9 year old children were infants and children aged 0-4, and seniors over 100. Under this legislation, industry will profit, but what will exposure to these programs do to young children?

There is nothing to indicate that prevention programs have reduced suicides in Texas teens. Their suicide rates are skyrocketing in spite of years of suicide prevention programs. Elementary schools do not need these programs. Call the Members of the Senate Education Committee and Tell Them to Vote No on SB980.

Some members of Senate Education are co-authors of the bill. They have asterisks by their names.

Sen. Larry Taylor, Chair 512-463-0111

***Sen. Eddie Lucio Jr., Vice Chair** 512-463-0127

Sen. Bob Hall 512-463-0102

Sen. Paul Bettencourt 512-463-0107

Sen. Bryan Hughes 512-463-0101

Sen. Jose Menendez 512-463-0126

Sen. Angela Paxton 512-463-0108

Sen. Charles Perry 512-463-0128

***Sen. Beverly Powell** 512-463-0110

***Sen. Charles Schwertner** 512-463-0105

Sen. Royce West 512-463-0123

Also, please email or call your senator and house representative and ask them to vote NO on these bills (SB 980 and HB 2954) (find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov).

statutes.capitol.texas.gov

mcisd.net

texassuicideprevention.org see page 7.

texassuicideprevention.org see page 8.

Update On Religious Liberty

1. HB525 Rep. Matt Shaheen - Relating to the protection of religious organizations. Passed House State Affairs Committee and sent to Calendars committee.

ACTION: Please call House Speaker Dade Phelan- Phone: 512-463-1000 or email at house.texas.gov and request that he help get this bill to the House floor immediately while there is still time.

2. SB797 by Senator Bryan Hughes - Relating to the display of the national motto in public schools and institutions of higher education. Passed the Senate and has been sent to the House Public Education committee.

ACTION: Please call or email House Public Education Chairman Harold Dutton and let him know we need immediate action and support for SB 797 (Harold Dutton 512-463-0510, harold.dutton@house.texas.gov).

3. HB1239 by Rep. Scott Sanford and SB 26 by Senator Angela Paxton - Relating to prohibited suspension of laws protecting religious freedom and prohibited closure of places of worship. HB 1239 passed the House and was sent over to the Senate and SB26 was passed out of Senate and is in the House State Affairs Committee.

ACTION: Please call Chairman Rep. Chris Paddie to take action and pass SB 26 out of House State Affairs 512-463-0556, chris.paddie@house.texas.gov

4. SJR 27 by Senator Kelly Hancock - Proposing a constitutional amendment to prohibit this state or a political subdivision of this state from prohibiting or limiting religious services of religious organizations. SJR 27 was passed out of the Senate and is now in the House State Affairs Committee.

ACTION: Please call Chairman Rep. Chris Paddie to take action and pass SJR 27 out of House State Affairs 512-463-0556, chris.paddie@house.texas.gov

5. HCRI by Rep. Stephenson - Supporting prayers, including the use of the word "God," at public gatherings and displays of the Ten Commandments in public educational institutions and other government buildings. Passed House State Affairs committee and needs to be placed on the House Calendar.

ACTION: Please call House Speaker Dade Phelan- Phone: 512-463-1000 or email at house.texas.gov and request that he help get this bill to the House floor immediately while there is still time.

6. HB1691 by Rep. Tony Tinderholt - Relating to the protection of religious freedoms and religious institutions during a declared state of disaster. Left pending in House State Affairs committee

ACTION: Please call Chairman Rep. Chris Paddie to take action and pass this bill out of committee 512-463-0556, chris.paddie@house.texas.gov

7. HB1291 by Rep. Keith Bell - Relating to notice of the right to object to participation in an abortion procedure for health care personnel of a hospital or health care facility. HB 1291 received a hearing in House Public Health but was left pending and it needs to pass out of committee to House Calendars.

ACTION: Email or call Public Health Chairwoman Stephanie Klick and ask her to please pass HB 1291 quickly while there is still time - (512) 463-0599, stephanie.klick@house.texas.gov

8. SB581 By Senator Bettencourt- Relating to regulation by a property owners' association of certain religious displays. Passed the Senate and is now in House Business and Industry.

ACTION: Contact Rep. Chris Turner, Chairman, at chris.turner@house.texas.gov to pass SB 581 out of committee.

9. HB1579 by James White and SB654 by Senator Paul Bettencourt Relating to the protection of the free exercise of religious rights of inmates and ensuring access to volunteer and faith-based chaplains and chaplaincy services. HB 1579 has been referred to House Corrections Committee but no scheduled hearing

(Rep. Andrew Murr is Chairman) and SB 654 has been referred to Senate Criminal Justice Committee but no scheduled hearing (Senator John Whitmire Chairman).

ACTION: Call or email Rep. Andrew Murr andrew.murr@house.texas.gov, 512-463-0536 to please take immediate action on HB 1579 and support this bill. Call or email Senator John Whitmire to please take immediate action on SB 654 and support this bill john.whitmire@senate.texas.gov, (512) 463-0115

Update On Life Bills

1. SB 8 by Sen. Bryan Hughes - Texas Heartbeat Act (HB 1515 in the House) – This bill prohibits abortion after the preborn child's heartbeat is detectable and equips the Pro-Life movement with the legal tools needed to combat the abortion industry and protect Pro-Life laws.

2. SB9 by Paxton Trigger Abortion Ban (HB 1280 in the House) – Bans abortion in Texas whenever the Supreme Court overrules Roe v. Wade wholly or partly.

3. SB394 by Sen. Lucio Regulating Abortion-Inducing Drugs (HB 2337 in the House) – Puts into Texas law FDA regulations on abortion-inducing drugs that have been or are expected to be repealed by the Biden administration.

4. SB650 by Sen. Donna Campbell Ban taxpayer-funded abortion “logistical support”(HB 1173 in the House) - 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.

5. SB802 by Sen. Angela Paxton Every Mother Matters Act (EMMA) (HB 2313 in the House) Requires pre-abortion counseling outside the abortion clinic.

6. SB1173 by Sen. Kelly Hancock - Preborn NonDiscrimination Act (PreNDA) (HB 3218 in the House) The Preborn NonDiscrimination Act would ban discriminatory abortion based on the preborn child's race, sex, or disability, eliminate the remaining late-term abortions, connect families to life-affirming social and medical services.

7. SB1647 by Sen. Charles Perry Texas Abolition Strategy Omnibus Bill - The Texas Abolition Strategy outlines the process by which Texas can eliminate all elective abortions. The bill bans discriminatory abortions, abortions after the preborn child's heartbeat is detectable, and the remaining elective abortions, with staggered enforcement dates.

ACTION for each of these seven (1-7) Life Bills above: They have each passed the Senate and now need to be voted on by the House. Call House Speaker Dade Phelan - 512-463-1000 or email at house.texas.gov and request that he help get these to the House floor immediately while there is still time. Please email or call your House Representative and ask them to support and vote YES for these bills (find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov).

8. SB917 & HB2609 The Respecting Patients' Right to Life Act - This bill will protect patients' right to life by ensuring hospitals can't remove basic life-sustaining treatment against a patient's or surrogate's wishes with a mere 10-days notice but must treat the patient until a transfer facility is secured.

ACTION: Contact the Chairwoman of the Senate Health and Human Services, Lois Kolkhorst - (512) 463-0118 lois.kolkhorst@senate.texas.gov - ask her to support the bill and pass SB 917 out of Committee so it can receive a vote on the Senate floor.

Update On Gambling Bills

1. Daily Fantasy Sports HB 393 by Rep Moody – This bill passed out of the House State Affairs Committee and is headed to the House floor and needs to be stopped.

House bill 393 amends definition of bet to exclude participation in Daily Fantasy Sports from definition. Here is an article on DFS – stoppredatorygambling.org and the SBTC also has a statement strongly opposed to DFS.

ACTION - Please contact your Texas House Representative to let them know you are opposed to the expansion of gambling in Texas. (find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home).

2. Keno HB 394 by Rep Moody – This bill passed the House and is headed to the Senate where we must let our Senators know we are opposed to the expansion of all gambling in Texas.

ACTION :Please contact your Senator to let them know you are opposed to HB 394 and the expansion of gambling in Texas. (find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home).

3. HB 817 by Rep Moody Both of these bills have already been voted out of committee and is headed to the House floor and must be stopped.

ACTION: Please contact your Texas House Representative to let them know you are opposed to HB 817 and the expansion of gambling in Texas. (find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home).

These two Keno bills would allow drawings every four minutes, equaling 285 draws a day. Game would be predominantly played in bars and restaurants, seven days a week. (HB 394 allows drawings on Sunday). Keno is very addictive. “Keno addicts seem to get out of control within two to three weeks,” she says, noting by contrast that gamblers who become addicted to horse racing typically go to the races for two to five years before getting hooked.” Read more here: statesman.com and here: baltimoresun.com

4. Statewide Electronic Raffles HB 2168 by Rep. Matt Krause – This bill passed out of the House Licensing and Administrative Committee and is headed to the House floor and needs to be stopped. This bill is a form of online gambling that Texas has never had before. This would be a dangerous inroad and set up for future sports betting and would allow electronic facsimiles game of chance (raffles) to be purchased on-line/mobile phone. Also allows credit cards to be used to make the purchase. This is a first, and is a bad bill.

With 50/50 paper raffles having been purchased at sports stadiums in the past, and 50% of it goes towards a designated non-profit, HB 2168 would allow you to purchase raffles, even if you are not at a game, on your phone or mobile device. This would expand the raffle to electronic devices. This is not the same as paper raffle tickets at ball parks. This would allow a statewide electronic raffle for people around the state to place a wager which we currently do not have the ability to do. How do you verify if someone participating is a minor? There would also be the risk of out-of-state players. The proponents are pushing the narrative that “50% of the money will go to charities” and these charities need it having had deficits from the past year. They also cite that because of COVID not as many people want to go to sport stadiums. The answer is not online raffle sells, rather the legislature needs to pass legislation preventing government from being able to shut everything down again. The sport stadiums in Texas can open up now and need to solve the problem regarding how they will get people to their stadium. This is an expansion of gambling.

ACTION: Please contact your Texas House Representative to let them know you are opposed to HB 2168 and the expansion of gambling in Texas. (find who represents you here – wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home).

More reading:

From Financial Times: Millennial Money: Gambling via apps drains my friends' finances ft.com

Illegal Gambling also Tends to Increase When States Legalize Gambling. stoppredatorygambling.org

The TERLC and SBTC addresses our gambling position here in our legislative priority statement -sbtexas.com

In case you missed our previous Sentinel issues visit sbtexas.com/ethics-religious-liberty