

Texas Legislative Update

July/August Special Session

On Thursday, July 8, 2021, the Texas Legislature began one of several special sessions planned for this year to complete unfinished business. The Texas Legislature is in session every two years for 140 days with the 87th Legislative session having just ended on May 31, 2021.

At the beginning of the 87th Texas Legislative Session in January, 2021, we had submitted our Legislative Priorities Statement (here sbtexas.com) to the Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, many legislators, as well as asked our members to write their legislators and send our statement to each one personally (see this edition of the Sentinel – sbtexas.com).

These were our eight legislative priorities:

1. Religious Liberty
2. Sanctity of Life
3. Opposition to Gambling
4. Gender Identity
5. Family, Education and Parental Rights
6. Orphan Care
7. Sex Trafficking
8. Economic Freedom

See here for how the session ended - sbtexas.com

Each special session lasts up to 30 days and there is no limit to the number of special sessions the governor can call. The governor stipulates which specific topics can be addressed through legislation and puts forth an agenda (known as the call). It is not a guarantee that all the items the governor chooses will pass through the Legislature.

On July 1st, the SBTC delivered a letter to Governor Abbott asking for certain issues to be placed on the call - see here: sbtexas.com Only one of the issues we raised is being considered by the governor (girls sports), and could be weakened by not providing protections for young women at the collegiate level.

Several legislators have stepped forward and asked Governor Abbott to also add a ban on child gender modification procedures. The SBTC encourages government officials and policy makers to support public policies that recognize the unalterable God-given distinctions between male and female. Our policies should respect the physical differences between the sexes instead of resorting to unverifiable “gender identity” to determine who is a boy (male) and who is a girl (female). Sex is a bodily reality that does not change according to how one dresses or feels.

On July 7, Gov. Greg Abbott released his agenda that he would like to see addressed by the Legislature: Bail Reform, Election Integrity, Border Security, Safeguarding Freedom of Speech from social-media censorship, Article X Funding, Family Violence Prevention, Youth Sports, Prohibiting Abortion-Inducing Drugs, Thirteeneth Check, Strengthening the Ban on Critical Race Theory, and Appropriations – for more of an explanation of each one see here - sbtexas.com

Soon after the Special Session began, enough Democrat members fled to D.C. to prevent a quorum. Back in January, House Speaker Phelan was asked to assign only members of the Republican majority as committee chairs, but chose not to. After quorum was broken, many people from around Texas called in and Speaker

Phelan did remove Representative Joe Moody, the Speaker Pro Temp, however many are still upset that there is no quorum for House business to be completed and are now asking that all Democrat committee chairs be removed, fines issued, and some are even asking for arrests to be made in order to bring them back to Austin to complete a Special Session which ends August 6th. The Governor is expected to call another Special Session.

Meanwhile, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and the Senate have had enough Democrat members who did not flee the Capitol to have a quorum and they have been able to get work done. There have been committee hearings and votes taken.

Here is an update on bills for Special Session that fall within our legislative priority list.

Youth Sports

On Monday, July 12th in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, a hearing took place for SB2, a girl's sports bill filed by Senator Perry requiring public school and public institution of higher education students to compete in interscholastic athletic competitions based on biological sex, and SB 32 to protect girls' sports from biological boys competing on girls' teams up to 12th grade. Testimony in support of these bills was submitted on behalf of the SBTC. Both bills passed the Senate, but remain stalled due to no quorum in the House.

So far Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Mississippi, Tennessee, West Virginia, Montana and South Dakota have all enacted some form of bans that prohibit biological males from playing on girl's, or women's, sports teams. A majority of the Texas House and Senate supported specific legislation to do the same during the Regular 87th Session, as there should be no reason to not protect women and young girls.

With the increase of biological males entering women's sporting competitions, our daughters are having to live under the threat of being robbed of hard earned opportunities.

There has been a proliferation of transgender ideology whether among corporations, media, or especially schools under the guise of equity and diversity, mental health, or SEL -social emotional learning programs- which has resulted in an environment in which children are many times encouraged to explore alternative genders and identities.

Read Al Mohler's March 4, 2019 edition of The Briefing addressing "Ethical Sports Issues That 'Destroy' Male-Female Distinctions" - baptistmessenger.com/

ACTION: Please call Speaker Phelan Austin Office: 512-463-1000, or email: dade.phelan@house.texas.gov and your House representative (To find out who represents you, go to wrm.capitol.texas.gov), as well as Governor Abbott and let them know it is imperative that SB 2 is passed and also includes the collegiate level of protecting girls sports.

Please call Governor Abbott: 512-463-2000

Email the Governor's Chief of Staff: Luis.saenz@gov.texas.gov, or call 512-463-1762

Email the Governor's Senior Policy Director, Steve Munisteri: Steve.Munisteri@gov.texas.gov, or call 512-463-1830

Family Violence Prevention

This bill (SB72) will require schools to provide instruction to middle- and high-school students about dating violence, domestic violence and child abuse. It is very concerning. While there is a provision to allow opt-out for parents, it should be opt-in only. Dating violence, domestic violence, and child abuse are Health Education subjects and should also be placed under Texas Education Code 28.004 so there would be more transparency and parental oversight in the choosing of which program is implemented in the school district. School District

School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) are given authority to “assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district’s health education instruction.” statutes.capitol.texas.gov

Furthermore, this bill (SB72) is unnecessary due to the fact that the subjects of abuse, family and dating violence are already covered in the newly adopted Health TEKS. In 2020, the State Board of Education adopted the new Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 115 Health TEKS standards. tea.texas.gov

When looking at many of the curriculum suppliers around the country for dating and family violence, (such as Love is Respect) it is clear this would be a “vehicle” for Comprehensive Sex Education. This bill should not be supported.

ACTION: Please contact your Texas Representative and Senator, along with Governor Abbott and Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, and tell them we are concerned about more attention being taken off of academics, as well as this curriculum being a vehicle for comprehensive sex-ed. Please relay that this material is already covered in the Health TEKS, and should be opt-in only, as well as under the School Health Advisory Councils – 28.004 of the Texas Education Code, for added transparency and local control.

Please call or email Lt. Governor Dan Patrick – ltgov.texas.gov, and your Texas Senator
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Child Gender Modification Ban

Even though this was not placed on the Special Session Call by the Governor, he stated that he was going to announce executive action soon on the issue. As of date, we are still waiting to hear. Nonetheless, Rep. Matt Krause filed HB 166 which would prohibit professional liability insurance policies from covering damages assessed against a health care provider that provided these services and revoke the license, certification, or authorization of a physician or health care provider for gender transitioning or gender reassignment medical procedures on Texas children. It has a majority support in both the House and the Senate.

ACTION: Please call Governor Abbott and let him know it is imperative he place this issue on the Special Session Call.

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Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Unbeknownst to many, the 87th Texas Legislature passed SB 123 – a seemingly harmless bill on the surface dealing with character education (see here: capitol.texas.gov). However, under further analysis, this bill is anything but harmless. The character words that are in SB123 come straight from one of the main supporters of the bill, CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). Their definitions are very troubling measuringSEL.casel.org

Authored by three Democrat Senators – two of which receive over \$30,000 each in Planned Parenthood campaign donations, the stated intent of the bill is to “advance educational equity.”

Here is how CASEL sees educational equity casel.org/equity-and-sel-resources/ (“Transformative SEL” is a process whereby young people and adults build strong, respectful, and lasting, relationships that facilitate co-learning to critically examine root causes of inequity, and to develop collaborative solutions that lead to personal, community, and societal well-being. This form of SEL is aimed at redistributing power to promote social justice through increased engagement in school and civic life. And two of their Core features: Enhancing and foregrounding social and emotional competencies needed for civic engagement and social change, such as reflecting on personal and social identities, examining prejudices and biases, interrogating social norms, disrupting and resisting inequities, and co-constructing equitable and just solutions. Prioritizing students’ individual and collective agency to take action for social justice.)

Here are some links from others who have warned about SEL -

thefederalist.com

pioneerinstitute.org

truthinamericaneducation.com

flstopccoalition.org

breitbart.com

Some ways this bill can be fixed have been suggested by an expert who has worked on protecting Texas children from comprehensive sex-ed for a decade:

1. DEFUND - Defund is a “Follow the Money” strategy such as what was effectively done with SB 22 in defunding abortion providers by prohibiting certain taxpayer resource transactions or defunding organizations and efforts with appropriations riders.

2. CLEAN UP - go in and delete statute. Some law might be unfunded mandates. Others are funded and the money should be directed.

ACTION: Please contact your Texas Representative and Senator, along with Governor Abbott and Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, and tell them we are concerned about more attention being taken off of academics, as well as Social Emotional Learning being a vehicle for comprehensive sex-ed and Critical Race Theory and SB 123 needs to be defunded or cleaned up and deleted.

Please call or email Lt. Governor Dan Patrick – ltgov.texas.gov, and your Texas Senator

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Please be praying for our leaders during this important time for our state and nation.