



ERLC Trustee Statement of Affirmation & Encouragement September 10, 2024

Purpose: To acknowledge and address concerns and to create a greater sense of understanding, unity, and trust between the ERLC, the churches we serve within the SBC, and between the ERLC trustees, president, and staff.

Plan: To agree to provide affirmation and encouragement from the ERLC trustees to the ERLC president and staff to assist in navigating the turbulent political atmosphere in the culture and in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Parameters: The guidelines for these affirmations and encouragement will be the purpose statement put forth within the ERLC Charter adopted by the trustees on March 6, 1997, and the current mission statement of the ERLC, and the four main areas the ERLC seeks to bring truth to bear on public policy.

ERLC Purpose Statement From the Original Charter

“To assist Southern Baptists to become more aware of the ethical implications of the Christian gospel with regard to such aspects of daily living as family life, human relations, moral issues, economic life and daily work, citizenship, and related fields; and by helping them create, with God’s leadership and by his grace, the kind of moral and social climate in which the Southern Baptist witness for Christ will be most effective” (p.4, #13)

ERLC Mission Statement

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission exists to assist your churches by helping them understand the moral demands of the gospel, apply Christian principles to moral and social problems and questions of public policy, and to promote religious liberty in cooperation with churches and other Southern Baptist entities.

ERLC’s Four Main Areas of Cultural Engagement

Life - We aim to promote a culture of life where our society sees immeasurable value in every person, from conception to natural death, because all people are created in God's image.



Religious Liberty - We work to protect religious liberty—a first freedom and Baptist principle rooted in the belief that a “free church in a free state” serves our churches, provides for the common good, and allows believers to share the gospel freely.

Marriage and Family - We celebrate God's good design and desire to see policies enacted that allow men, women, and children to flourish according to God's plan for sexuality and family.

Human Dignity - True human dignity, rooted in the Imago Dei, motivates the ERLC to honor all people as made in God's image. We stand for the displaced, the trafficked, the preyed upon, and the persecuted—wherever they might be.

Affirmations & Encouragement

1. We affirm and support that the ERLC president and staff continue the excellent work in which they are engaged, in bringing light and hope to the public square and their work in keeping the churches informed about the pressing moral issues of our day.
2. We affirm the [Advocacy Assessment](#) created under the ERLC president to ensure when matters in the public square are engaged by the entity they are rooted in Scripture, guided by the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, and reflective of resolutions passed by messengers at the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention. Furthermore, we affirm the organization's understanding of engaging issues within the four categories of life, religious liberty, marriage & family, and human dignity as consistent with both the ministry assignment given to the commission by churches and the historic areas of engagement by the ERLC over the course of its 100-year existence.
3. We affirm the objective set forth by the ERLC president of creating an office of Church Engagement within the organization to ensure SBC pastors, staff members, state executives, and all other denominational leaders are familiar with the purpose, mission, and areas of cultural engagement related to the ERLC. We encourage the ERLC to pursue this objective as quickly as possible.
4. We affirm the characterization made by the ERLC president that the organization views itself as operating “from” its service rendered to the churches of the SBC. We encourage the president and



the staff to continue receiving and processing feedback from the churches and trustees, as it strives to be both faithful and effective in fulfilling the ministry assignment of the ERLC.

5. We affirm that in a time of deep division in our culture, from polarization in our political environment, to falling trust in institutions, to the fracturing of families, the ERLC is needed now as much as ever both to serve in the public square in a manner consistent with the earthly ministry of Jesus and to be a consistent voice that continually points people to the salvation that can only come through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Considering this polarized political environment, we encourage the ERLC to be cautious when addressing controversial political issues by allowing the [Advocacy Assessment](#) to serve as the guide in choosing the wording of the response.