



April 10, 2026

Dear Members of Congress,

I am writing to you as the interim president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). Our organization represents the public policy interests of over 46,000 churches and nearly 13 million members through their membership in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest Protestant denomination in the United States.

As Southern Baptists, we believe that civil government is ordained by God, that citizens have a duty to obey the governing authorities, and that lawmakers bear the responsibility to pass laws that reflect the moral truths revealed in Scripture and creation and protect the common good (Rom. 13:1-7). Your efforts to pass annual appropriations legislation are a critical component of stewarding this duty.

As you prepare to begin negotiations for new appropriations legislation, I write to thank you for your work on Fiscal Year 2026 funding bills and, in anticipation of Fiscal Year 2027, remind you of policy issues that matter deeply to Southern Baptists.

There is [much to celebrate](#) in many of the final Fiscal Year 2026 bills. Most significantly, the final spending bills once again included the long-standing “Hyde-family” of appropriations riders. After several years of Democratic-led opposition to these riders, their continued presence is significant.

Other significant wins in this year’s appropriations bills include:

- Bars funding for “gender transition” procedures and “gender-affirming” care for minors under certain military health plans.
- Prohibits the use of foreign assistance funding to pay for abortions or abortion counseling as a method of family planning.
- Prevents federal funds from being used to reschedule marijuana.
- Protects against the use of taxpayer dollars to discriminate against people of faith.
- Provides robust funding for the office of International Religious Freedom at the Department of State, including set-aside allocations for those experiencing religious persecution around the world.

In gratitude for these successes, and in recognition of certain provisions not included, we urge the retention of provisions concerning life, marriage and family, religious liberty, and human dignity in upcoming Fiscal Year 2027 funding bills. These issues are foundational to Southern Baptists—rooted in the truth of Scripture, and reflective of our confession of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message*.



Our nation's values are most clearly displayed through our allocation of resources. This remains true for resources secured through annual appropriations spending. It is our desire for those resources to be used in a way that promotes life, religious liberty, and the flourishing of all our neighbors.

In light of these principles, we have included the ERLC's Fiscal Year 2026 provisions of concern and support, with some additions, below. Originally sent to members and staff last fall, it is our aim that this high-level list serves as an aid as you consider new requests, new challenges, and the ever-evolving needs of our great nation in its 250th year.

ERLC Top Areas of Support and Concern in FY26 Appropriations

Below is a list of priority items for each subcommittee bill. The original list was shared with members in fall 2025. It has been updated based on Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations bills, ERLC recommendations, and the Fiscal Year 2027 President's Budget.

Agriculture

- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits the use of embryos in research ([Sec. 734](#)) (*Became PL 119-37*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits the use of funds to be used to establish new or maintain computer networks unless blocking pornography ([Sec. 713](#)) (*Became PL 119-37*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funding from being used to take discriminatory action against a person due to speech or acts related to religious beliefs surrounding the definition of marriage between one man and one woman ([Sec. 780](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Expresses concern regarding marijuana rescheduling ([Bill Report, Page 84](#)) (*House text only*)

Commerce, Justice, and Science

- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funding to pay for, facilitate, perform, or require to perform an abortion ([Sec. 202, Sec. 203](#)) (*Became PL 119-74*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funds from being used to investigate or prosecute religious institutions on the basis of their religious beliefs ([Sec. 221](#)) (*Became PL 119-74*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prevents governments from being sued over single-sex sports, facilities, or limiting transgender medical procedures ([Sec. 576](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prevents funds in this bill from being used to reschedule marijuana ([Sec. 607](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funds used for gender transition procedures and treatments ([Sec. 610](#)) (*House text only*)

Department of Defense (War)

- **(UPDATED) CONCERN:** On the whole, this provision continues DoD coverage for assisted reproductive technologies, including in-vitro fertilization (IVF), for active duty



service members rendered infertile by severe illnesses or injuries sustained while on active duty. ([Sec. 8123](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)

- We are grateful for the following limited pro-life concessions:
 - The removal of the time limit on cryopreservation and storage of embryos, ensuring innocent lives are not destroyed.
- However, we remain concerned about the provision of IVF coverage for military servicemembers with indefinite freezing of embryos in perpetuity and no incentive to bring embryos to term by either biological or adoptive parents.
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits abortion-related travel and lodging expenses, prohibiting the use of funds for paid leave or travel expenses related to obtaining an abortion ([Sec. 8142](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funds being used for “gender-affirming” care ([Sec. 8145](#)) or for gender transition procedures for minors covered under certain military health plans ([Sec 8138](#)) (*House text only*)

Energy and Water

- **SUPPORT:** Blocks the use of funds to maintain or establish computer networks unless the network blocks the viewing, downloading, exchanging of pornography ([Sec. 503](#)) (*Became PL 119-74*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funding from being used to take discriminatory action against a person due to speech or acts related to religious beliefs surrounding the definition of marriage between one man and one woman ([Sec. 506](#)) (*House text only*)

Financial Services and General Government

- **SUPPORT:** Repeal of DC Death with Dignity Act ([Sec. 819](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibition of coverage of abortion or abortion counseling under the Federal Employees Health Benefits program ([Sec. 613](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
- **SUPPORT:** Pro-life funding restrictions and instructions for the DC government ([Sec. 726](#) (*Became PL 119-75*), [Sec. 808](#) (*Became PL 119-75*), [Sec. 809](#) (*House text only*), [Sec 820](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Conscience protections for opting out of prescription contraception coverage if the carrier objects to coverage on the basis of religious beliefs ([Sec. 726\(a\)\(b\)\(c\)](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
- **SUPPORT:** Istook Amendment ([Sec. 208](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits coverage of “gender-affirming” care under the Federal Employees Health Benefits program ([Sec. 761](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits use of funds to hire, promote, recruit, or retain anyone who has been convicted of a child pornography charge ([Sec. 755](#)) (*House text only*)



Homeland Security

- **SUPPORT:** Prohibit ICE funds for abortion-related travel and lodging ([Sec. 222](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits the use of ICE funds for “gender-affirming care” for any person in ICE custody ([Sec. 223](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Report language urging the Department to exhaust all options before pursuing immigration enforcement actions at sensitive locations like houses of worship (Amendment, [Bill Report](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Report language directing DHS to release a report on combatting antisemitism, as part of the implementation of [EO 14188](#) ([Report](#)) (*House text only*)

Interior and Environment

- **SUPPORT:** Blocks the use of funds to maintain or establish computer networks unless the network blocks the viewing, downloading, exchanging of pornography ([Sec. 416](#)) (*Became PL 119-74*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funding from being used to take discriminatory action against a person due to speech or acts related to religious beliefs surrounding the definition of marriage between one man and one woman. ([Sec. 442](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funding for the promotion of Critical Race Theory ([Sec. 441](#)) (*House text only*)
- **CONCERN:** Prohibitions on coverage of “gender-affirming” care in the Indian Health Service not included ([Sec. 514](#)) (*FY2025 House text*)

Labor, HHS, and Education

- **SUPPORT:** Maintained key pro-life riders (*Became PL 119-75*)
 - Nickles Amendment ([Sec. 209](#))
 - Hyde Amendment ([Sec. 506](#))
 - Weldon Amendment ([Sec. 507](#))
 - Dickey-Wicker Amendment ([Sec. 508](#))
- **SUPPORT:** Pro-life, pro-family family planning provisions
 - Greenwood Amendment ([Family Planning](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
 - Specter Amendment ([General Departmental Management](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
 - Castle Amendment ([Sec. 207](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
 - [Sexual Risk Avoidance Education, Competitive Grant Program](#)—funding for competitive grants for sexual risk avoidance (defined as voluntarily refraining from non-marital sexual activity) (*Became PL 119-75*)
 - Prohibits funding to “prohibited entities,” which provide abortion services ([Sec 238](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funds for “gender-affirming” care ([Sec. 244](#)) (*House text only*)



- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits [EO 14076](#), [EO 14079](#), [EO 13988](#) from taking effect ([Sec. 241](#) and [Sec. 243](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits the use of federal funding for hospitals or other entities that offer post-graduate physician or health training if they provide training in the performance, assistance, or referral for abortions if they require such training or discriminate against students that do not wish to receive such training ([Sec. 237](#)) (*House text only*) (Also in [Sec. 524](#), FY27 President's Budget Estimate for the Department of Labor)
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits the use of funding to conduct or support research using human fetal tissue if such tissue is obtained via an induced abortion ([Sec. 236](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Certain protections for unaccompanied minors ([Sec. 230](#) (*Became PL 119-75*), [Sec. 231](#) (*Became PL 119-75*), [Sec. 254](#) (*in House text only*), [Sec. 231](#) (*Became PL 119-75*))
- **(NEW) SUPPORT:** Directing the CDC to submit a report on instances where providers have facilitated or counseled assisted suicide to individuals suffering from mental health conditions, including anorexia or other eating disorders ([Aderholt En Bloc Amendment #2](#)) (*House text only*)
- **(NEW) SUPPORT:** Prohibits funds given under the Higher Education Act from going to schools that discriminate against religious student groups by denying them access to resources otherwise available to them ([Sec. 313](#)) (*House text only*)
- **(NEW) SUPPORT:** Prohibition of Title X Family Planning Services Grants funding for IVF treatments under infertility services; Instead, prioritizes access to ethically sound medical treatments that both respect the dignity of the human person and seek to treat the underlying root causes of infertility (Anchored in [ERLC IVF Policy Recommendations](#), based on [recent Title X guidance](#))
- **(NEW) SUPPORT:** Prohibition of federal insurance coverage for IVF ([ERLC IVF Policy Recommendations](#))
- **(NEW) SUPPORT:** Prohibition of funding for medical research that uses aborted fetal tissue ([Sec. 522](#), FY27 President's Budget Estimate for the Department of Labor)
- **(NEW) SUPPORT:** Prohibition of funding for abortion providers, such as Planned Parenthood, from receiving any funding made available through the LHHS bill ([Sec. 520](#), FY27 President's Budget Estimate for the Department of Labor)

Legislative Branch

- **SUPPORT:** Blocks the use of funds to maintain or establish computer networks unless the network blocks the viewing, downloading, exchanging of pornography ([Sec. 209](#)) (*Became PL 119-37*)
- **SUPPORT:** Report language on creating a prayer space for Senate staff and interns ([Senate Report](#)) (*Senate text only*)



Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs

- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funding for abortion, abortion counseling, elective abortions, defunding the Biden administration's interim final rule on abortion ([Sec. 255](#)) (*House only*) (*Addressed through Dept. of VA [final rule](#) in Dec. 31, 2025*).
- **CONCERN:** The Murray Amendment, on the whole: Allows the Department of Veterans Affairs to use its medical funds for assisted reproductive technologies, including in-vitro fertilization (IVF), for veterans who are rendered infertile by service-connected injuries. ([Sec. 234](#)) (*Became PL 119-37*)
 - We are grateful for the following limited pro-life concessions included in the text:
 - (1) allow adoption reimbursement for such veterans;
 - (2) incorporate the Dickey-Wicker Amendment by cross-reference, which bars funds for creating or destroying an embryo in a research context; and
 - (3) bar any time limitations on Federal cost-sharing for the freezing and storage of human embryos.
 - 4) includes adoption reimbursement
- **CONCERN:** Provides funding for gender-specific care with potential to paying for and providing for abortion, including leave and travel related to obtaining the abortion ([Sec. 251](#)) (*Became PL 119-37*)

State and Foreign Operations

- **(NEW) SUPPORT:** Prevents grants to nongovernmental organizations or international organizations if they are not compliant with the Protecting Life in Foreign Assistance [rule](#) published in the Federal Register on Jan. 27, 2026 ([Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance](#), FY27 President's Budget Estimate for the Department of State)
- **SUPPORT: All longstanding pro-life riders** (*Became PL 119-75*)
 - Helms Amendment ([Sec. 7018](#))
 - Young Amendment ([Peace Corps](#))
 - Biden Amendment ([Sec. 7018](#))
 - Siljander Amendment (under [Global Health Programs](#))
 - Kamp-Kasten Amendment (under [Global Health Programs](#))
 - Livingston-Obey Amendment ([under Global Health Programs](#))
 - Prohibition of funding for United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), or any NGO that makes a subaward with global health assistance funds, for family planning, maternal, and reproductive health activities ([Sec. 7057\(b\)](#))
- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits any use of federal dollars that would violate [EO 14187](#), including directly funding or transferring money to an organization that funds, counsels for,



promotes, conducts, or subsidizes “gender-affirming” care. ([Sec. 7067\(f\)](#)) (*House text only*)

- **SUPPORT:** Funding for international anti-human trafficking efforts ([Sec. 7060\(g\)](#)), and to prevent violence against women and girls, including child marriage, rape, and female genital cutting and mutilation ([Sec. 7059\(d\)](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
- **SUPPORT:** International Religious Freedom Office fully funded at \$50M ([Sec. 7033](#)) (*House text only*) (*Funded at \$40 million in PL 119-75*)

Transportation, Housing, and Rural Development

- **SUPPORT:** Prohibits funding from being used to take discriminatory action against a person due to speech or acts related to religious beliefs surrounding the definition of marriage between one man and one woman. ([Sec. 422](#)) (*House text only*)
- **SUPPORT:** Blocks the use of funds to maintain or establish computer networks unless the network blocks the viewing, downloading, exchanging of pornography ([Sec. 414](#)) (*Became PL 119-75*)
- **SUPPORT:** No funds made available may be used in contravention of [EO 14168](#) (Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government) or [EO 14173](#) (Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity) ([Sec. 425](#)) (*House text only*)

In closing, we remain committed to praying for each of you as you navigate these complex and often weighty budgetary matters. We ask God to multiply your wisdom and discernment in the work ahead.

Respectfully,

Dr. Gary Hollingsworth
Interim President
Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
of the Southern Baptist Convention

CC: Speaker Johnson, Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Jeffries, Minority Leader Schumer