



# Biblical Citizenship Briefing

July 2023

*This briefing is strictly for your information. It is a summary of some current public policy issues, including pending legislation, that involve moral and biblical principles. While suggested action may be included from time to time, no specific position by EFCC is implied. Find contact and subscription information at the end of this document.*

## In California

**Summer Recess Creates Constituent Opportunity** – All state bills had to be through their assigned policy committees in their second house by July 14 to continue toward passage this year. Bills that were successful at meeting that deadline will move to the Appropriations Committee, if they have a fiscal component, and/or to the floor of the second house when lawmakers return from their summer recess on August 14. Bills then have one month to pass their second house before moving to Gov. Newsom's desk for his signature or veto. This recess is a great time to seek out your elected representatives at local events or in their district offices to develop a relationship and share your views. Find your California legislators at [findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov](https://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov). Some bills you may wish to discuss include:

**AB 665** (Wendy Carrillo, D-L.A.) concerns parental rights. It allows children ages 12 and over to consent to mental health treatment and *admit themselves to residential shelter services without parental involvement* [emphasis added] if a “professional person” feels that the minor is “mature enough to participate intelligently in the outpatient services or residential shelter services.” Professional persons include psychology trainees and social work interns. Read more [here](#).

**AB 957** (Lori Wilson, D-Suisun City) requires judges determining custody and visitation cases to consider that “the health, safety, and welfare of the child includes, among other comprehensive factors, a parent’s affirmation of the child’s gender identity or gender expression.” The growing trend of penalizing parents who do not embrace experimental gender “treatments” for children and teens led Sen. Scott Wilk (R-Lancaster), now in his last term, to state in frustration at AB 957’s Senate Judiciary hearing, “If you love your children, you need to flee California. You need to flee.” Read more [here](#). Abigail Shrier, author of *Irreversible Damage*, delves into what this “affirmation” requirement may mean [here](#).

**SB 407** (Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco) requires foster parents to agree “to seek out any and all available resources” to meet the needs of all children they may foster regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression whether now or at some future time when such issues evolve. The bill raises concerns that Christian foster families who believe in the biblical gender binary will be forced to choose between fostering and their faith convictions. The foster care system desperately needs more loving and nurturing families. Fewer resource families could lead to more children being placed in group residential facilities, where they are often less supervised and at higher risk of recruitment into sex trafficking. Read more [here](#).

You will find the current status of these bills and many more at [judeochristiancaucus.com/bills-and-resolutions](https://judeochristiancaucus.com/bills-and-resolutions). (Referral for informational purposes only, does not imply an endorsement by EFCC of the opinions, positions, or contents of the site.) You may also look up any California legislation or search by keyword at [leginfo.legislature.ca.gov](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov).

**Bill to Make Trafficking Children a Serious Felony Passes Key Committee** – **SB 14** (Shannon Grove, R-Bakersfield) will define trafficking a minor for sex as a “serious” felony, making the heinous crime eligible for the Three Strikes law. This better ensures that traffickers spend more time in jail – even up to life if they reoffend. Currently, the penalties for trafficking a minor are 5, 8 or 12 years—and possibly 15 years to life under certain circumstances. But the reality is, according to district attorneys across the state, prison reform has provided credits toward early release, meaning criminals are too often serving less than half their time—and then reoffending upon release. While the State Senate approved SB 14 unanimously, on July 11 the bill received [just two aye votes](#) from the Senate Public Safety Comm. with six members abstaining—killing the bill. This committee has a reputation for blocking any legislation that lengthens prison sentences or could increase overcrowding. SB 14 appeared dead, but Sen. Grove went to work to save it. Newly-installed Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Governor Newsom both made public comments indicating their surprise at the hearing’s result, signaling that there was likely pressure behind the scenes to change the outcome. Two days later, in an unusually raucous Assembly floor session, there was a maneuver to bring SB 14 directly to the floor. That was not successful but, in the end, a rule was suspended to allow a special re-hearing of the bill by the Public Safety Comm. On second hearing the measure passed in just over a minute with six members in support and two not voting – Mia Bonta (D-Oakland and wife of Attorney General Rob Bonta) and Isaac Bryan (D-Culver City). Now, SB 14 must pass both the Assembly Appropriations Comm. and the full Assembly after summer recess. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Please consider asking the [Assembly Appropriations Comm. members](#) and your assemblymember to support SB 14 when the 2023 session resumes in August.

**Marriage Returns to the Ballot in 2024** – In 2008 California voters passed Proposition 8, adding the language “Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California” to the state constitution. Following the *Obergefell* decision in 2015 that legalized same-sex marriage across the country, this language became essentially moot. Now both the State Assembly and Senate have passed [ACA 5](#), which will remove this text from the California Constitution and add “[T]he right to marry is a fundamental right.” There is no text specifying the number of parties to a marriage or their age, nor does the language state that clergy will not be forced to preside over marriages that conflict with their faith. The Family Code, however, currently states that

“Two unmarried persons 18 years of age or older” may consent to marriage and that an authorized person “shall not be required to solemnize a marriage that is contrary to the tenets of the person’s faith.” These are, however, statutory stipulations and could be changed by future Legislatures without returning the issue to the people. The amendment passed both houses with the 2/3 vote required and support from both parties. There were no opposing votes – though nine senators and 13 assembly members abstained. See how your representatives voted [here](#).

ACA 5 will now appear on the ballot next November for Californians to decide if they wish to make marriage a “fundamental right.” Read more [here](#).

**Group Seeks to Install Parent-Friendly Policies in School Districts** – Earlier this year, the chair of the Assembly Education Committee denied [AB 1314](#) (Bill Essayli, R-Chino) a hearing. The bill would have simply required school districts to notify parents if their child was identifying at school as a gender other than their birth sex. Since that time, the newly-formed Coalition for Parental Rights has been working to develop a program to assist individuals and parent groups in approaching their local school boards with a parent-friendly policy, rather than continue “gender support plans” that keep vital information from parents. Some local districts are under the false impression that they must keep parents in the dark when their child presents with gender confusion at school. No state law requires that, yet the California Department of Education FAQs make it appear so.

Alliance Defending Freedom’s (ADF) Senior Counsel Kate Anderson discusses problems with “gender support plans” stating, “First and foremost, these plans hurt the students themselves. Children experiencing discomfort with their sex deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. They need effective and compassionate mental health care. And they need their parents ... By excluding parents, denying biological reality to students, and depriving them of the help they need, school administrators are leading children down a dangerous path.” Read more [here](#). Find out more about the Coalition for Parental Rights [here](#). They provide sample school board policies, a toolkit to guide parents through the process of approaching their school board and more.

## In the Courts

**High Court Sides with Creative Artist, Protects Speech** – In a 6-3 [decision](#) on June 30, the U.S. Supreme Court held that Lorie Smith and her company, 303 Creative, could not be forced to promote messages inconsistent with her beliefs. To be clear, Smith served all individuals in her design business, including LGBT clients. At issue was creating artistic wedding websites. The case, *303 Creative v. Elenis*, was a pre-enforcement challenge, meaning Smith requested a ruling to prevent the state of Colorado, under its Anti-Discrimination Act, from compelling her to design wedding websites for same-sex couples against her religious beliefs or face sanctions, including remedial training and monetary fines. Writing for the majority, Justice Neil Gorsuch stated, “The First Amendment’s protections belong to all, not just to speakers whose motives the government finds worthy. In this case, Colorado seeks to force an individual to speak in ways that align with its views but defy her conscience about a matter of major significance. ... Consistent with the First Amendment, the Nation’s answer is tolerance, not coercion. The First Amendment envisions the United States as a rich and complex place where all persons are free to think and speak as they wish, not as the government demands. Colorado cannot deny that promise consistent with the First Amendment.”

ADF CEO, President and General Counsel Kristin Waggoner, who argued the case before the Supreme Court, remarked, “This is a win for all Americans. The government should no more censor Lorie for speaking consistent with her beliefs about marriage than it should punish an LGBT graphic designer for declining to criticize same-sex marriage. If we desire freedom for ourselves, we must defend it for others.” Read more [here](#).

## In the News

**Parents Challenge Explicit Library Books** – When parents share the content of books found in their public school libraries to board members at public meetings, media reports must often redact the text and blur the images. These parents, from San Diego County, other areas of the state, and across the nation are aghast at the sexually-explicit descriptions, dialog and graphics found in books available at their children’s schools and seek to have them removed as inappropriate for elementary, middle, and even high school libraries. Often, the books describe graphic sexual encounters between the same sex. In fact, the first ten books on the American Library Association’s top ten most [challenged books](#) of 2022 are “‘claimed’ to be sexually explicit.” While parents are seeking merely to curate the obscene books available at their children’s school (not in bookstores or online) to protect their innocence, the media and progressive lawmakers are charging them with “book banning.” Capitol Resource Institute has created a toolkit for parents who wish to find and challenge the sexually-explicit books in their school libraries. Find it at [porninschools.com](#), but note that the content is graphic, because it includes the content found in these books. Read more [here](#).

**Pray** – Father, please protect the hearts and minds of precious children from exposure to ideas and images that will harm them. Help parents navigate the often treacherous waters of social media, online content, and even their schools. “*If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea.*” In Jesus’ name, Amen. (Mark 9:42)

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