Biblical Citizenship Briefing

October 2026

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The Election

Be Informed – Please do your part to help promote biblical values in our state by being an informed voter. We have resources to aid in your research on our page of the EFCC website, efcc.org/biblical-citizens.

Pray the Vote – As Election Day approaches, let's hold this election up in prayer. Ask God to guide you (James 1:5). Ask the Lord to place righteous people in office (Proverbs 29:2) *Father, we know You rule and reign over the affairs of men. You have placed us in a country where we have the right and responsibility to elect our human rulers. Encourage Your people to participate in this process and to vote for those who will most closely stand for Your precepts. Give us Your wisdom as we make these decisions, and Your favor in the outcome, according to Your perfect will. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

In California

Governor Continues Expanding Abortion Access – Though unsurprising, Gov. Newsom's decision to sign several abortion-related bills is certainly disappointing. He signed into law AB 1973 allowing nurse practitioners, nurse-midwives and physician's assistants to perform abortions beyond the first trimester, AB 2540 requiring student health centers on Cal State and UC campuses to promote awareness and availability of the medication abortions, and AB 2531 providing taxpayer funding for veterans' abortions with no requirement to offer other options. He also signed AB 1930, which requires any person or entity in California that receives a subpoena from another state regarding abortion or gender transition to notify the Attorney General at least seven days in advance before turning over any records unless federal law dictates a faster response. The governor did veto AB 2164, a bill that would have prohibited him from extraditing persons subject to criminal liability in their state for receiving or providing health care that is not legal there but is legally protected in California. Gov. Newsom rightly recognized that extradition is an executive function and cannot be dictated by the Legislature. However, AB 1854, which he signed, prohibits law enforcement from arresting anyone the governor refuses to extradite. Read more here.

Also signed into law – AB 2017, adding two Muslim Holy Days to the list of California's state holidays. AB 1803, requiring employers with just five or more employees to add "anti-hate speech" instruction to the existing one-hour sexual harassment training requirement (read more below). AB 2563, redefining "sex discrimination" in all state codes to include, in part, "degree of conformity to sex or gender stereotypes" and "gender, including gender identity, gender expression, and access to, and use of, gender affirming care and other related health care." AB 1628, a good life-saving bill expanding the timeframe for the safe surrender of newborns from 72 hours to 30 days without prosecuting a mother for child abandonment. AB 2242, another good bill to require schools to display, in at least one men's and women's restroom accessible to students, posters with information about the dangers of sextortion.

Vetoed (again) – Having already vetoed a nearly identical bill in 2024, Gov. Newsom vetoed SB 608, which would have required school-based health clinics in grades 7 through 12 to make internal and external condoms easily accessible to students. Gov. Newsom rightly wrote in his veto message, "The implementation decisions required by this legislation are best made locally, in consultation with educators, health professionals, students, parents, families, and based on the needs and circumstances of each community."

New State Requirements Run Counter to Biblical Beliefs – Currently, all California employers are required to provide employees with at least one hour of classroom or interactive training regarding sexual harassment. Supervisors must receive two hours of training. With the signing of AB 1803, every employer in California with five or more employees (public or private, for-profit or nonprofit) will be mandated, beginning in January 2028, to include "anti-hate speech" instruction (Another bill, AB 1578, requires the training for every elected official from the Capitol to the local school board.). The interactive training requires the employee or supervisor to *affirm* the instruction to progress through the module.

According to the law, "Anti-hate speech training shall provide supervisors and employees with practical guidance on recognizing, reporting, and confronting workplace speech that vilifies, humiliates, or incites hatred against people based on the protected characteristics" including reproductive health decision making, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation. The key problem is that terms such as "vilify," "humiliate," and "incite" are subjective. Does using pronouns that agree with a person's actual sex rather than his or her "preferred pronouns" apply? California Family Council warns, "The Civil Rights Department's own supervisor and employee module tells trainees that using the wrong pronoun for a transgender identified person on purpose is harassment, as well as objecting to a coworker's use of a restroom that does not match their sex. Dennis McCourt, a Christian employee of an out-of-state Bible software company, refused to click through slides that required him

to affirm those claims. 'You could put a gun to my head. I won't do it.'" Yes—you read that right—even out-of-state employers who have employees in California face this requirement for those residing here.

CFC's letter in opposition to the bill states, "Many California employers, including churches, religious nonprofits, and faith-motivated small businesses, hold sincere beliefs about human sexuality, marriage, and gender that mainstream culture increasingly labels 'hateful.' AB 1803 provides no religious exemption or conscience protection. Employees and employers who hold traditional religious convictions could be required to sit through, or deliver, training that characterizes their sincerely held beliefs as a form of hate. This places religious organizations in direct conflict with state mandates, threatening their ability to operate according to their convictions."

Do the training requirements apply to churches? It's unclear. Federal and state laws both require employers to accommodate sincerely held religious beliefs. CFC recommends, "If you object to the gender identity content now, put your objection and your request for accommodation in writing, and do the same when the hate speech component arrives. Employers who share those convictions, including churches, Christian schools, and ministries with five or more employees, should talk with their own attorney now about whether the religious employer exemption covers them. If you are an employee, employer, or pastor facing these trainings, contact CFC and we will help connect you with legal resources." Read more here. You may also contact National Center for Law & Policy.

In the Courts

Encinitas Adopts Notification Policy, Pays Christian Plaintiffs – After two years of litigation in federal court, two Carlsbad families and their attorneys from National Center for Law & Policy and First Liberty Institute have not only secured a change in the parental notification policy of the Encinitas Union School District (EUSD), but also a settlement of $175,000 to close the lawsuit. The case, *S.E. et al v. Grey et al*, revolves around the book *My Shadow Is Pink*. In 2024, Carlos Encinas' fifth-grade son, who at the time attended La Costa Heights Elementary School, was required to watch a read-along video of the gender-identity-themed book *My Shadow is Pink* with his kindergarten "buddy," and then ask the younger child what color represented him as part of the mentoring program. The fifth grader was immediately concerned about the book but had no opportunity to consult with his parents.

Based on the failure of EUSD to notify parents and provide an opt-out, the attorneys filed the suit in federal court on behalf of Mr. Encinas, his wife and 12-year-old son, together with an 11-year-old boy and his parents, against the Encinitas Union School District that September. A request for preliminary injunction was also filed and granted in part in May 2025.
Then, in June 2025, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Mahmoud v. Taylor* that parents must be notified and given the right to opt out of LGBTQ+ instruction or any instruction that conflicts with the religious teaching in the home. Following this decision, the school district voluntarily dismissed its appeal of the injunction and rewrote its notification and opt-out policy.

In July of this year, EUSD agreed to pay a settlement of $175,000 to close the case and, on September 14, a federal judge dismissed the lawsuit. "We are pleased EUSD changed its policies to provide parental notification and opt-outs when inculcating gender ideology or any material that substantially undermines families' religious beliefs," stated Dean Broyles, president and chief counsel of the National Center for Law & Policy. Broyles continued, "This sets a positive precedent for other school districts in California to follow to appropriately honor the rights of families. Fortunately, faithful families do not forfeit their First and Fourteenth Amendment rights at the public schoolhouse door." Read more here and here.

State Law Creates Troubling Development for Church Properties – A 2023 law was intended to streamline efforts of religious institutions and nonprofit colleges to rezone all or a portion of their property to build low-income housing offered at affordable rents. The bill's author, Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco) is quoted in the bill analysis stating, "SB 4 would make building affordable housing easier, faster, and cheaper for faith-based institutions and nonprofit colleges that want to do so. Many of these are already community anchors, and this would help them build stable, safe, affordable housing for local residents and families and open doors to high-resource neighborhoods."

Now, however, there are attempts by cities and developers to use SB 4 to potentially confiscate property from several California churches. For example, the Lakewood Planning Commission has approved a proposal to rezone church properties there as part of California's Regional Housing Needs Allocation process requiring the city to plan for 3,922 housing units from 2021-29. This stems from the state's ongoing requirements that localities build more housing by changing zoning or overriding existing zoning with density bonuses and other strategies. Because Lakewood and other cities are largely built out, they are looking at church parcels to answer the problem. To this point, eminent domain has not been used, but Brad Dacus, president of Pacific Justice Institute, told Tony Perkins on Washington Watch, "The real rub here is that companies and developers can come in and say to a court, 'Look, the city is not meeting their requirements to implement public housing for the homeless, so we are going to do it.' And the law allows them to file independent actions and be able to seek eminent domain against churches. Is it hypothetical? No. Right now, we are in Huntington Beach, California [in] Orange County defending a church at Calvary Chapel that is dealing with that issue. A developer [is] trying to take part of the land rights of a church right there in Huntington Beach under the same auspices … to say we need more housing." Read more here and here.

This briefing was prepared by the EFCC Biblical Citizenship Committee. Please feel free to share this publication with your friends and family. To subscribe or unsubscribe, or if you have any questions, please e-mail Penny Harrington (penny.harrington@cox.net) ; www.efcc.org/biblical-citizens