



SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTIST CONVENTION

Marijuana Facts

According to a bipartisan Senate report issued by the U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control:

NO amount of marijuana is safe for adolescents (10-24).

NO amount of marijuana is safe for pregnant women.

Marijuana-impaired drivers threaten public safety, yet no universal detection standards exist.

Costs of emergency room visits for marijuana related incidents have skyrocketed in recent years, costing millions of dollars.

New conditions, such as hyperemesis (severe cycles of nausea and vomiting) are on the rise, particularly as potency increases.

Vaping marijuana is linked to EVALI (e-cigarette or vaping product use associated injury)



News from the Statehouse

For most people, summer in South Carolina brings hot, humid days, vacations, afternoon thunderstorms, and a myriad of family outdoor activities. For the South Carolina Legislature, it brings final work on the budget, Senate and House Sub-Committee hearings, and later on this year, redistricting.

If you have been following my reports from the Legislature, you know there are several bills left over from the 2021 session that will likely be considered as early as January in the 2022 session. According to Senate insiders, the Republican leadership has promised to bring the Compassionate Care Act (Medical Marijuana, S150) up for debate and a possible vote as early as the second week of the session. As previously pointed out in this column, just as marijuana is a gateway drug for opioid and heroin addiction, S150 would serve as gateway



Advantages of Medical Right of Conscience

According to research provided by the Alliance Defending Freedom:

91% of religious doctors, nurses, and medical providers would rather stop practicing medicine than be forced to participate in a procedure that violates their ethical, moral, or religious beliefs.

81% of Americans surveyed said it was important that their medical providers shared their moral beliefs.

23% of respondents reported personally experiencing discrimination.

36% of medical students faced pressure or discrimination from medical school administrators or faculty based on their beliefs.

20% decided not to pursue certain fields due to a lack of tolerance for their moral, ethical, or religious beliefs. (80% of these respondents have chosen not to pursue a specialty in OB-GYN).

legislation for the legalization of recreational marijuana. Since marijuana remains an illegal drug and since it has not been approved by the FDA for medical use, doctors cannot prescribe it and pharmacists cannot dispense it. If S150 becomes law, it will require a complicated and convoluted system administered by DHEC to dispense marijuana cards for those who are deemed eligible. SLED, the South Carolina Medical Association, the South Carolina Sheriff's Association, and a host of Christian non-profit organizations will be working hard this summer and fall to inform and rally the public to oppose S150.

On June 15, the Columbia City Council voted 4-3 to ban so-called "conversion therapy" for minors designating it as a civil penalty that carries a \$500 fine. The Council defined conversion therapy as, "treatment that seeks to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, including efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same gender." Similar ordinances passed in other states have been struck down by the courts declaring them to be unconstitutional. Last November, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Florida's ban on conversion therapy violated the First Amendment protections of free speech.

Sen. Josh Kimbrell (R-Sptg) filed the Medical Ethics and Diversity Act (S811) to shore up existing law that protects medical professionals from being forced to violate their conscience or their personal religious beliefs in order to avoid criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. Sen. Kimbrell's bill would extend those protections to include licensed, professional, and pastoral counselors. The bill was assigned to the Senate Medical Affairs Committee, and the Subcommittee conducted its first round of public hearings on June 21st. A subsequent hearing will

be scheduled later this summer to allow additional testimony on the bill.

The Hate Crimes bill has been delayed in the Senate by a group of Republican Senators who are concerned about language in the bill that would add sexual orientation as a protected class in South Carolina. Once legislation is in place that recognizes sexual orientation as a legal classification under the criminal code, it will be easy to expand that language to other areas that could be used to infringe on religious liberty. The SCBC Office of Public Policy is working with other Christian grassroots groups to make sure legitimate hate crimes are prosecuted to the full extent of the law without endangering our religious liberty or threatening our free speech rights guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Finally, the Save Women's Sports bill that was voted down in the House Judiciary (six Republicans joined Democrats on the Committee to stop the bill), is now in the Senate Education Subcommittee. The first hearing took place in May and a second hearing will be scheduled for later this summer or early fall. Since the South Carolina House Judiciary failed to pass our bill, Florida became the latest state to pass legislation protecting women's sports. Florida's bill protects middle and high school athletes and extends those protections to cover college and university athletes. We are hoping our Save Women's Sports bill can be amended to include college and university athletes and that it will have a much easier path through the Senate in January.

Thank you for staying informed on important, culture shaping, legislative issues that are being considered in South Carolina. Please check your email each month for the SCBC Public Policy Newsletter and be on the lookout every day for Action Alert emails that will let you know when our lawmakers need to hear from you. If you would like to have a user friendly, mobile tool that will help you to follow what is happening at the State House (including the ability to watch streaming video of all committee meetings), go to the iTunes store and download the free SC Legislature app.

Please pray for these Legislative Leaders this month:

Rep. Nathan Ballentine - Republican, District 71 (Richland and Lexington)

Address: 320B Blatt Building, Columbia, SC 29201

Phone: 803-734-2969

Committee Assignments: Ways and Means

Sen. Richard Cash - Republican, District 3 (Anderson County)

Address: 506 Gressette Building, Columbia, SC 29201

Phone: 864-505-2130

Committee Assignments: Banking and Insurance, Education, Family and Veteran's Services, Judiciary, Medical Affairs.

He must increase, I must decrease

Dr. Tony Beam

Senior Director of Church and Community Engagement, North Greenville University

Director of the Office of Public Policy for the SCBC.