

The Christian Index

Under the Gold Dome

By Mike Griffin

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I am reminded of I Chronicles 12:23 that says the Sons of Issachar “understood the times and knew what to do.” With this in mind, I have been studying the various resolutions passed down through the years by our convention. These, along with *The Baptist Faith and Message*, make up the framework that Dr. White and I use in speaking on legislation before the Georgia General Assembly.



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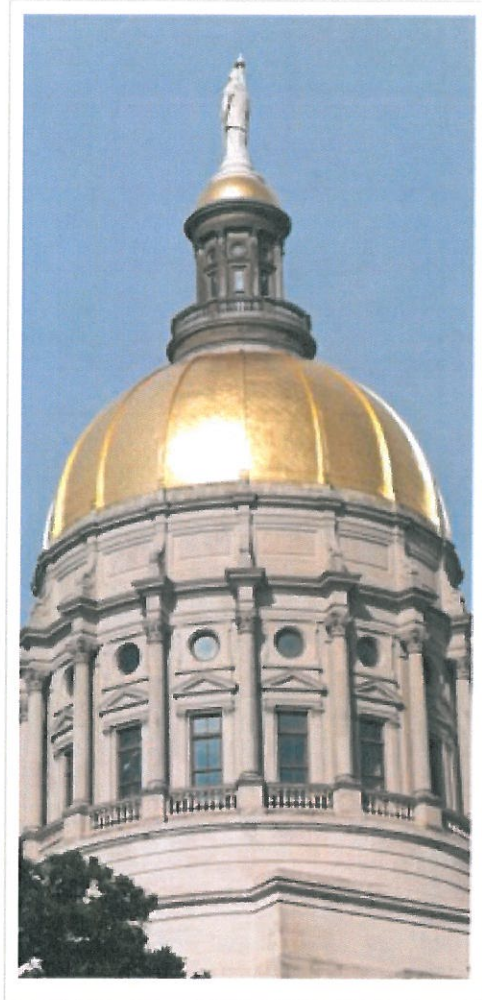
It is interesting to note that the top three bills we have been supporting represent the three unalienable rights that we have been given by God. God gives us our rights and the government has a responsibility to protect those rights! Life, liberty and property rights (“pursuit of happiness”) are those rights declared in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

The first bill deals with prohibiting taxpayer-funded abortion through state and federal insurance plans. Senate Bill 98 was sponsored by Sen. Judson Hill. The passage of this will prohibit abortion coverage through both federal and state exchanges related to Obama Care. The legislation also puts into law a prohibition of taxpayer funds being used to support state employee abortion coverage. This puts into law actions taken by Gov. Nathan Deal in 2013 to stop taxpayer funding of insurance abortion coverage.

Since 1977, Georgia Baptists have gone on record nine times to warn their fellow Georgians about the dangers of killing children through abortion!

The next bill deals with protection of religious liberty. Rep. Sam Teasley and Sen. Josh McKoon both introduced Religious Freedom Restoration Acts (HB 1023/SB 377) known as “RFRA’s.” The first RFRA was passed in 1993 by then President Bill Clinton with an almost unanimous passage by Congress. Since its passage, state agencies have shown a reckless disregard for this federal law and state versions are needed to provide citizens and businesses with an extra layer of protection. Eighteen states have passed their own version of RFRA and judges in 13 additional states have affirmed RFRA protections. Core government functions, such as preventing violent crime and enforcing laws against racial and gender discrimination, have not been hampered by RFRA. There has not been a single court case where the final decision went against these laws!

Even with these facts in mind, the homosexual community, along with “big businesses” like Coke, Delta, and Home Depot, were able to deter the General Assembly’s leadership from passing either of these bills! It is a shame that bills meant to protect religious freedom were misrepresented as “homosexual Jim Crow Laws” and labeled as discriminatory and prejudiced. People of faith should be protected from unjust zoning and building permit laws. They also should not be required, at school or work, to perform acts or services that violate their religious convictions. And yes, bakers, florists, and photographers should not be required to participate in homosexual weddings!



The last bill deals with property rights and is called "The Safe Carry Protection Act" (HB 875) sponsored by Rep. Rick Jasperse (Its final passage was under an amended version HB 60.). This legislation has gotten a lot of attention because it includes a section allowing churches the right to have concealed weapons on their property.

Our basis for supporting this bill comes from the fact that Southern Baptists believe in the autonomy of the local church. By speaking in favor of this bill, we were not saying that we were for or against weapons being in churches. We were saying that we believe that churches have the right to choose for themselves on this matter. Since churches have a right to own their property, we believe they also have a right to decide what can and cannot be done on that property. Therefore, it should be the local church, not the state, to determine this.

The final passage of the bill involved an "opt in" provision so that churches may now choose to allow licensed gun permit owners to "carry" on church property. Each church is responsible to approve this provision before it is legal to do so.

Thanks for the opportunity to serve you and please feel free to contact me on these and other issues you may have concerns about.

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