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## 2017-2018 Legislative Agenda

New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms (NYCF), New York's statewide evangelical Christian advocacy organization, works to protect human life, promote strong families, preserve religious liberty, and proclaim justice and mercy. NYCF's agenda for the 2017-2018 Legislative Session focuses on legislation that will advance each of these four important objectives.

### Protecting Human Life

The basic human right to life is a fundamental principle. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets forth this principle as a matter of international law, stating that "[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," and that "[e]veryone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." This same principle undergirds the entire American experiment; the signers of the Declaration of Independence bravely pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to the proposition that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." However, the right to life does not find its origins within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or within the Declaration of Independence. Rather, the right to life originates from the Bible, and specifically from the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). The current American policy of abortion on demand is a profound violation of the most basic human right. NYCF supports laws and public policies that protect innocent human life from conception to natural death.

In regard to the protection of human life, NYCF supports the following measures:

- A law prohibiting the abortion of pain-capable late-term infants;
- A Butler Amendment to the New York State Budget, which would prevent tax dollars from being used to fund elective abortions;
- A law requiring the Department of Health to inspect diagnostic and treatment centers on a biennial basis;
- The Unborn Victims of Violence Act;
- A ban on the discriminatory practice of sex-selective abortion;
- Legislation mandating parental notification before an abortion is performed on a minor;
- The removal of taxpayer funding from Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers; and
- A ban on human cloning and embryonic stem cell research.

NYCF opposes the following measures:

- The Medical Aid in Dying Act, which would legalize physician-assisted suicide;
- Any form of abortion expansion legislation, including the Reproductive Health Act;
- A state constitutional amendment establishing a fundamental right to abortion;
- The misleadingly-named Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act, which would require group insurance policies to cover abortion-causing drugs, voluntary sterilization procedures, and all other FDA-approved contraceptive devices without restrictions, copays, or cost sharing;
- Legislation that would allow for the destruction of frozen human embryos;
- Infringements on the freedom of conscience of medical facilities, medical personnel or pharmacists; and
- Legislation that would require compelled speech by pro-life pregnancy centers.

## Promoting Strong Families

NYCF's family agenda is based upon the belief each child should—whenever wise and possible—be raised in an intact family unit by his or her own mother and father. On average, children who grow up in intact families are likely to be healthier, better educated, more affluent, and less involved in substance abuse or criminality than children who do not. Tragically, however, fewer and fewer American children are raised in intact families of origin. In light of the marriage crisis in our society, as well the impact that crisis has had upon children's health and well-being, NYCF advocates legislative and non-legislative efforts to promote marriage. Because children whose parents are not able to raise them also need loving homes, NYCF strongly supports measures to increase adoption—particularly adoption by married couples. In addition, NYCF opposes government infringement upon parental rights, and upholds the God-given gender identity of every male and every female. Therefore, NYCF supports the following:

- Legislation reversing the New York Court of Appeals decision in *Matter of Brooke S.B. v. Elizabeth A.C.C.*, 28 N.Y.3d 1 (2016) and providing that a person without a biological or adoptive relation to a child lacks standing to seek child custody or visitation;
- A study bill regarding a potential state income tax deduction for parents who adopt special-needs children;
- A legislative resolution recognizing that pornography is a public health hazard;
- Increasing the Empire State Child Credit, making the amount of the credit equal to the amount of the federal child tax credit;
- Legislation banning the use of taxpayer funds for sex reassignment surgeries performed upon minors and for the treatment of minors with puberty-suppressing drugs or cross-sex hormones (reversing an existing regulation);
- A statewide strategic plan to place all adoption-eligible foster children in adoptive homes;
- Elimination of existing laws relating to taxation and entitlements that penalize individuals who marry and/or limit the entitlements they can receive if they choose to marry; and
- No-fault divorce repeal.

NYCF opposes:

- The Child-Parent Security Act, or any other legislation that would allow surrogate parenting contracts;
- Providing STD treatment to minors without parental consent;
- The proposed Healthy Teens Act, which would provide a funding stream for Planned Parenthood to engage in sex education in schools; and
- Mandatory HPV vaccination.

## **Preserving Religious Liberty**

Religious liberty has been appropriately described as our “first freedom.” It is no coincidence that the Framers of the Constitution chose to place the Free Exercise Clause and its guarantee of religious liberty into the very first of the ten constitutional amendments contained within the Bill of Rights. NYCF supports individual New Yorkers’ rights to practice their faith, to speak about their faith, and to live out their faith without undue government intrusion. NYCF also advocates for laws that allow churches to operate without government interference. Furthermore, NYCF opposes any efforts to tax churches and other faith-based organizations. Accordingly, NYCF supports:

- The removal of unnecessary required approvals in certain church real estate transactions;
- Equal access for churches and Christian groups seeking to use public buildings;
- Legislation protecting individuals, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses that conscientiously object to participation in same-sex “marriage” ceremonies; and
- Legislation requiring a one-minute moment of silence at the beginning of each public school day.

NYCF opposes:

- The proposed Counselor Coercion Bill, which would ban licensed mental health practitioners from providing change therapy for minors with unwanted same-sex attraction;
- The proposed Boss Bill, which would prevent employers—including faith-based charities—from considering an employee’s reproductive health decisions in making employment decisions;
- Requiring churches and nonprofits to pay fire district taxes; and
- Further extension of the temporary utility tax (also known as the 18-a surcharge) as it applies to houses of faith.

## **Proclaiming Justice and Mercy**

NYCF believes in the core American values of freedom and equality of opportunity. Our Christian faith requires us “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8b). NYCF supports measures that protect the rights and freedoms of law-abiding New Yorkers, including

educational choice measures. We also support laws that protect vulnerable New Yorkers and help lift New Yorkers out of poverty. NYCF advocates for legislation that provides clarity—not confusion—in regard to matters of sexual and gender identity. Finally, NYCF supports clean-government initiatives to enhance the accountability of our elected officials and restore the public’s confidence in state government.

NYCF supports:

- Legislation banning colleges and universities from requiring homeschooled high school graduates to obtain General Education Development (GED) exams in order to (a) be admitted to college, or (b) graduate from college;
- Clarification of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) to ensure that New York schools are not required to allow the use of opposite-sex restrooms, changing rooms, locker rooms, or shower rooms;
- The reversal of government regulations that treat so-called discrimination based on “gender identity” as unlawful sex discrimination;
- Education tax credit legislation, provided that such legislation includes a homeschool tax credit;
- A tax credit for employers that hire persons who have recently received government assistance; and
- Legislative efforts to eradicate human trafficking.

NYCF opposes:

- Legalization of marijuana for recreational use;
- Legalization of online poker; and
- The Gender Expression Nondiscrimination Act (GENDA) (also known as the Bathroom Bill), along with any other bill that would provide special legal protections based on gender identity or expression.

In the realm of clean government, NYCF opposes taxpayer funding of political campaigns; we also oppose a state constitutional convention, unconstitutional limits on political speech, and efforts to ban or limit outside income for state legislators. NYCF supports the following proposals:

- A “Truth in Spending Act” that would create disclosure requirements prior to the allocation of appropriations, whether requested by the Governor or by Members of the Legislature;
- Tenure limits for legislative leaders;
- Term limits for statewide officials and state legislators;
- A law requiring that committee votes be made available online and that session and committee meetings be webcast;
- Pension-stripping for elected officials currently in office who are convicted of official misconduct; and
- A voter identification law.