

Sherman pastor named to task force that will study ERLC

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NASHVILLE (BP)—Mike Stone, chair of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, has named the members of a task force authorized by the group at their February meeting to study the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's effectiveness.

Mike Lawson, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Sherman, will join Stone on the task force. His congregation is dually aligned with the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Others named to the task force are Ron Hale, a retired pastor from Jackson, Tenn.; Cheryl Samples, a retiree from Dallas, Ga.; Hoyt Savage, lead pastor of Foothills Baptist Church in Las Vegas, Nev.; Monte Shinkle, senior pastor of Concord Baptist Church in Jefferson City, Mo.; and Rolland Slade, senior pastor of Meridian Baptist Church in El Cajon, Calif.

The [task force](#) was appointed after Executive Committee members voted to address concerns “regarding how the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's actions in relation to its ministry statements are affecting the convention and its relationships with local churches, local associations and state conventions.”

Chairman David Prince and other officers of the ERLC board of trustees responded in [an open letter](#) to Stone and the Executive Committee, calling the task force “unwarranted, divisive and disrespectful.”

Stone and Executive Committee officers replied: “When we continue to hear a growing number of reports that churches are either planning to

decrease or withhold Cooperative Program gifts and are given specific reasons that relate to a Southern Baptist entity, we have a responsibility that we are granted under the bylaws of the SBC to consider those reports.”

In a press conference following the Executive Committee meeting, Stone said the action created “a formal process by which we can receive information and determine the level that this issue is affecting the Cooperative Program.”

The task force’s work is expected to begin immediately. The motion passed by the Executive Committee calls for a report from the task force at or before the group’s Sept. 21-22 meeting in Nashville.