

Southern Baptists defeat motion to abolish the ERLC

June 11, 2025

DALLAS—Southern Baptists defeated a motion to do away with the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the Southern Baptist Convention’s moral concerns and public policy agency.



Willy Rice (left) of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Fla., introduced a motion to abolish the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. (Photo by Marc Ira Hooks / The Baptist Paper)

Messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Dallas voted 3,744 (56.89 percent) to 2,819 (42.84 percent) on June 11 to reject a motion introduced by Willy Rice of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Fla., to abolish the ERLC.

Rice called his motion a “wake-up call” to the agency.

“Why bring a motion to abolish the ERLC? Because this is how we save it,” Rice told the SBC annual meeting on June 11.

SBC Bylaw 25 requires a majority vote at two consecutive annual meetings to abolish any convention entity.

“It gives that entity time to hear the concerns of our churches, pursue meaningful reform and return with a renewed mission,” he said.

Without citing specifics, Rice raised concern about “outside progressive advocacy groups” providing financial support to the ERLC.

“Facts are stubborn things, and the evidence is clear. And the trust is broken,” Rice said.

The [Center for Baptist Leadership](#) has asserted the Open Society Foundations—founded by George Soros—funded the National Evangelical Forum. The National Evangelical Forum, in turn, helped create the Evangelical Immigration Roundtable, of which the ERLC is a member.

The ERLC acknowledges it works with multiple coalitions, including the Evangelical Immigration Roundtable, but it has denied any financial links.

“The ERLC has never taken any funding from George Soros or Soros-related entities. In addition, the ERLC has never received any money from the EIT or given money to the EIT. There are no financial ties whatsoever between the ERLC and EIT,” the [ERLC stated on its website](#).

Effort to defund Planned Parenthood emphasized

Richard Land, a former president of the ERLC, spoke in opposition to abolishing the agency. Land citing ERLC influence on public policy, such as the House-approved measure to “defund the evil and infamous organization known as Planned Parenthood.”

“It would be particularly tragic” to do away with the ERLC at this pivotal time, he insisted.

“We have more opportunity right now to influence public policy in our nation’s capital than we have had in my lifetime,” Land said.

The president and a majority in the House and Senate are “sympathetic to what we as Southern Baptists are trying to do to turn back the barbarians at the gate in our culture,” he asserted.

Earlier in the day, current ERLC President Brent Leatherwood in his report to the SBC also mentioned defunding of Planned Parenthood as evidence of how some of Southern Baptists’ public priorities are advancing at the national level.

After Leatherwood presented his report, ERLC trustee Jon Whitehead asked what assurance Southern Baptists have that the agency will promote only those policies that reflect the will of churches.

Leatherwood said the ERLC uses a “decision-making matrix” in determining public policy priorities. Each potential issue is judged in terms of whether it is rooted in Scripture, reflective of the Baptist Faith & Message, and responsive to the will of SBC messengers, as reflected in adopted resolutions, he said.