THSC ASSOCIATION

Texas Home School Coalition ASSOCIATION

Dedicated to Serving and Protecting the Home School Community of Texas

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 27, 2014

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Texas Right To Life & Texas Home School Coalition Intervene in Federal Lawsuit Ethics Commission Threatening First Amendment Rights

March 27, 2014 -- Two of Texas' largest grassroots organization filed to intervene in a federal lawsuit that could have precedent setting implications for the organizations' members and activities. Recent actions of the Texas Ethics Commission jeopardize the privacy of their members, who could be subject to bureaucratic harassment.

Melissa Conway, Director of Communications for Texas Right to Life, said the actions of the TEC threaten the constitutionally protected freedom of association by requiring charitable donors to be listed as if they are political contributors.

"While Texas Right to Life Political Action Committee strictly adheres to disclosure laws which our political donors expect, those who support our public policy efforts and our many outreach programs should not fall prey to overreaching, duplicitous tactics of government bureaucrats; these freedom-loving Texans should be free to support any non-profit charities just like they support their church or other ministries. Foreseeably, TEC could target all our members as political donors," said Conway. "Advocacy organizations at any end of the political spectrum should be alarmed by TEC's actions, which are hauntingly similar to the IRS currently targeting organizations that they found too influential."

Texas Right to Life, the largest and oldest pro-life group in the state, joined the Texas Home School Coalition in filing motions to intervene in a federal lawsuit filed by Empower Texans against the TEC. The TEC has issued subpoenas to Empower Texans that would force the group to turnover the names of donors, e-mail list subscribers and news sources. In their motions, Texas Right to Life and Texas Home School Coalition explain that they are similarly situated and fear persecution and unconstitutional prosecution by the state agency.

BOARD of DIRECTORS: Ray Ballmann, D. Min., D.D., S.T.M. *Glen Rose* · George Clay *Wichita Falls* · Kent Dowden *Wylie* · James Frank *Wichita Falls* · Donna Harp *Austin* · Pat Hurd *Weatherford* · Mary James *Austin* · Tim Lambert *Lubbock* · Doug McKissick *Cypress* · Tom McMinn *Hempstead* · Gavino Perez *San Antonio* · Sarah Singleton *Houston* · David Strassner *Houston*

"Last week the federal judge said these subpoenas were 'absurd,' and I would have to agree," said THSC president Tim Lambert. "Our organization has worked for three decades to protect parents from abusive and intrusive actions of state government, and we have no intention of allowing such abuse to take place."

In THSC's pleading, the organization asked the TEC to provide the appropriate filing numbers to report their independent expenditures during the recent primary election so as to ensure that THSC was completely compliant with state law. TEC officials refused, telling the group to instead report the expenditures on the forms of their related, but legally separate, political action committee. According to legal advisors, reporting in this manner would explicitly violate state law.

The motions were made today in the Austin court of Federal District Judge Sam Sparks.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Questions about this matter should be directed to attorney George B. Murr.