

Mississippian Moore to depart Southern Baptist's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission at end of month

NASHVILLE (BP and local report) – Biloxi native Russell Moore is leaving the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville to take a role with the evangelical magazine, Christianity Today.

Moore, who has served as president of ERLC since June 2013, announced the evening of May 18 that he will begin a role this summer as a public theologian for what the magazine described as “a new Public Theology Project.”

In a message posted to his personal blog, Moore said the project “is devoted to cultivating a forward-looking, joyful, consistent Gospel witness. I’ve struggled with this decision, because my gratitude for the honor of serving the [ERLC] is so deep.”

“As I conclude my time serving Southern Baptists as ERLC president, I am filled with gratitude as well as excitement for the future,” he said, noting that he was “thankful for Southern Baptists, whom I love and to whom I owe so much.”

David Prince, chair of the ERLC board of trustees and pastor of Ashland Avenue Church in Lexington, Ky., expressed gratitude for Moore’s service and sadness over his resignation, which is effective June 1.

He said ERLC’s trustees would identify a new leader to continue the commission’s work, which he described as “essential to the SBC.” Daniel Patterson, ERLC executive vice

president, will serve as acting president.



Moore was the eighth president of the entity, which is tasked by Southern Baptists with helping churches understand the moral demands of the Gospel and public policy, as well as promoting religious liberty on behalf of Southern Baptists. Originally created by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in 1913 as the Social Service Commission, it was renamed the Christian Life Commission in 1953 and the ERLC in 1997.

In a release announcing Moore's departure, ERLC noted that under his leadership, the entity advocated for "human dignity, religious liberty and justice before Congress, the White House and the Supreme Court," and touted ERLC accomplishments under Moore.

However, during Moore's tenure the ERLC has at times been a flashpoint of controversy within the SBC, most notably in reaction to his opposition to Republican then-candidate and now former U.S. President Donald Trump.

In 2017 and 2020, task forces were formed by the SBC Executive Committee to study the ERLC's impact on the Cooperative Program (CP) under the leadership of Moore. The 2017 task force reported the impact on the CP was "not as significant in fact as it is in perception."

In a report issued in February 2021, the second Executive

Committee task force acknowledged both ERLC support within the SBC and that some see it as “a source of significant distraction from the Great Commission work [Matthew 28:18-20] of Southern Baptists.”

The 2021 report also asserted that “the current perception of the leadership and direction of the ERLC by many Southern Baptists is a substantial impediment to the growth of the Cooperative Program.”

In announcing Moore’s hiring at the Carol Stream, Illinois-based magazine, president and CEO Tim Dalrymple described Moore as “indisputably one of the most significant evangelical voices of our time,” adding in a statement: “He illuminates the relevance of the Gospel to the whole of life, from everyday matters of faith to the great debates in our society and culture.”