

One that got away

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Editor



Perkins

Just about everyone in the state had an opinion to share during the heated Mississippi flag debate a little over a week ago in the Mississippi Legislature. Both sides were determined to win what amounted to a giant tug of war.

Some folks were adamant that the flag, with the Cross of St. Andrew/Confederate Battle Flag emblem in the canton, had to go because to them it was a bitter symbol of a dark period in the state's history. Others saw family meaning and southern tradition in the old flag and were determined to keep it as it was.

The flag changers ultimately won out in the Legislature, and Mississippians will have an opportunity to vote on a design for a new flag in a few months.

The flag flap took up so much time and was so hard-fought that most of us missed a piece of legislation that was passed and signed into law by Republican Governor Tate Reeves – legislation that in the long run will be incalculably more consequential to the welfare of the state's citizens.

House Bill 1087, introduced and shepherded through the Legislature by Republican Rep. Trey Lamar of Senatobia, turned Mississippi liquor law on its head. Previously, every county in the state was legally dry by default, with a local referendum needed to legalize liquor. Lamar's bill made every county legally wet by default, and requires a referendum to go dry.

It is now legal to possess alcohol in every county in the

state.

As stunning as the swift ratification of this new law were the votes in the Senate and House of Representatives. The House passed it overwhelmingly 112-5, and the Senate went for the slam dunk on a vote of 38-11.

Now, there are more than five professing Mississippi Baptists in the House, and more than 11 professing Mississippi Baptists in the Senate. While no comprehensive lists exist, it appears the House has at least 37 Mississippi Baptists. It appears the Senate has at least 14 Mississippi Baptists.

Lamar identifies on legislature lists as a member of First Church, Senatobia.

The vote count means if you are represented in the Legislature by a Mississippi Baptist, either your representative or senator (or both) likely voted to expand access to alcohol, which will inarguably lead to more lives disrupted, marriages and families destroyed, and carnage on the highways of our state.

"We at the Christian Action Commission (CAC) were disappointed that the Legislature passed HB 1087," said Kenny Digby, CAC executive director. "Though 1087 only affects possession of alcohol, not sales, we oppose any bill that makes alcoholic drink more available across our state instead of less available.

"We have witnessed numerous bills that have destroyed the Local Option bill passed in 1966. The 10 counties with no alcohol sales will be the most adversely affected."

Perhaps every Mississippi Baptist who goes to church with a legislator could ask him/her how they voted on HB 1087, which will result in more future tragedies than can be counted. Perhaps every Mississippi Baptist who knows a legislator of any faith can ask why they voted for this awful law.

Perhaps every Mississippi Baptist could stop using alcohol themselves, before they ask.