



POLICY
WATCH

2025

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DR. ELISE SAULSBERRY

CEO & FOUNDER

Rev. Elise Saulsberry, PhD (she/her) is a Memphis-native community educator, author, activist, policy analyst, and community pastor. She serves as CEO of Gravity Co, LLC; and Founder of Remnant Community Outreach, a nonprofit organization. Dr. Elise holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology and Theology and a Master of Divinity in Theological Studies with a concentration in Evangelism and Church Planting.

In her work, she integrates Black Liberation and Womanist theology with education, policy, healthcare access, advocacy, and interfaith organizing. In 2023, she spoke at the Summit for Religious Freedom, applying Womanist and Black Liberation theological frameworks to reproductive autonomy and religious freedom. She also contributed to public health strategy—as a coalition partner in St. Jude's Community Advocacy Board, TN HIV Modernization Collaboration, End HIV 901 - Memphis/Shelby County's plan to end the HIV epidemic. She was also a member of Planned Parenthood's Clergy Advocacy Board.

Dr. Elise deeply understands the critical importance of accessible, culturally-affirming mental health care and healthcare access for Black women, girls, and vulnerable people. She is dedicated to creating brave spaces—environments where individuals can show up fully, speak their truths, and engage in healing without fear of judgment, stigma, or erasure. Through her nonprofit and ministry work, she bridges gaps between faith communities, mental health professionals, and those often excluded from traditional care systems.

She is an interfaith advocate who joined hundreds of clergy in a Faith in Public Life sign-on letter supporting reproductive freedom in March 2022, and has engaged audiences through Abortion Access Front in conversations around faith-rooted reproductive justice. Dr. Elise's voice has been featured by Nevertheless She Preached, notably via her 2022, "Why the Fight for Reproductive Rights Must Be Intersectional." Her thoughtful leadership has also appeared in SWERV Magazine, where her LGBTQ Liberated Thought profile highlights her holistic theological approach to justice.

She has been a presenter in conferences and a guest of several informative conversations, including, Black Lesbians Conference 2025 - Atlanta, GA, "Maintaining the New Normal with United Ministries in Christ Fellowship: Bishop V. Hutcheson and Apostle D. Phils Montgomery," where she examines faith leadership navigating post-pandemic ministry; and Embrace for Change, discussing women's mental health w/ Dr. Lashonne Jackson to name a few.



REMNANT'S MISSION IN POLICY

Our organization bridges the gap between policy and people by translating complex legislative language into clear, accessible summaries that highlight everyday impacts. Instead of legal jargon, we center questions like, “How will this affect my family’s healthcare?” or “What does this mean for me?” Through workshops, forums, and digital outreach—often in partnership with faith groups and community providers—we ensure vital information reaches those most affected. We also equip individuals with tools to advocate, making civic participation approachable no matter their education or prior experience, and we emphasize cultural competency by tailoring materials to diverse audiences and languages.

In the 119th Congress, several consequential bills are shaping debates around faith-based advocacy, criminal justice, healthcare access, and LGBTQ+ rights. The Equality Act (H.R. 15 / S. 1503) seeks to codify federal protections for sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics, while the Transgender Health Care Access Act (H.R. 2487) would expand gender-affirming care through provider training and integrated community health services. These efforts come amid intensifying state-level restrictions, positioning federal protections as an essential counterbalance for vulnerable populations.

Criminal justice and immigration have also taken center stage with the passage of the Laken Riley Act, mandating detention without bond for certain noncitizens and underscoring an enforcement-first approach. Other justice bills aim to address sentencing, reentry, and systemic inequities, though their progress varies. Meanwhile, healthcare remains a contested battleground, with federal bills on Medicaid, Medicare, maternal health, and behavioral care competing with state-level bans, insurance exclusions, and “conscience clause” provisions. Together, these proposals highlight the urgency of accessible advocacy and education for communities most impacted.

LEGISLATION'S IMPACT ON THE VULNERABLE

Dear Stakeholders, Community Partners, and Advocates,

As we present this comprehensive bill status report for the 119th Congressional Session, we emphasize the critical importance of legislative monitoring and community education—especially for the vulnerable populations we serve. At Remnant Community Outreach, our commitment to tracking and translating complex legislative processes is grounded in a simple truth: policy decisions made in Washington directly shape the daily lives of those who often have the least voice in the process.

Vulnerable communities—including low-income families, immigrants, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness—are disproportionately affected by federal legislation. Yet these same groups often lack the resources, time, or access to follow complicated political developments. The bills highlighted in this report address areas that touch every part of life: healthcare through Medicare, Medicaid, and ACA provisions; housing stability via affordable housing initiatives; food security through nutrition programs; educational equity via Title I funding and student loan policies; immigration reform impacting families and pathways to citizenship; criminal justice reform influencing incarceration and reentry; and economic opportunity through minimum wage and job training measures.

The 119th Congress, beginning in January 2025, reflects a significant political shift following the 2024 elections, in which Donald Trump won the presidency and Republicans gained congressional control. This transition reshapes priorities, committee leadership, and legislative strategies. It also heightens the stakes for vulnerable populations, as changes in party control often bring attempts to reverse existing protections, restructure social safety nets, and realign funding priorities. Combined with ongoing crises—ranging from pandemic recovery and economic uncertainty to pressing demands for racial equity and social justice—this session carries profound implications for the communities we serve.

Community engagement is especially crucial in this moment. Policy changes during transitions often occur swiftly, with limited opportunity for public input, leaving vulnerable communities at risk of being caught off-guard. Engaging early is far more effective than attempting to reverse harmful policies after passage. Newly elected representatives may also be more responsive to constituent voices as they establish their priorities, creating both opportunities for advocacy and challenges in protecting existing gains. For these reasons, legislative awareness is not optional but essential: it ensures that vulnerable voices are not erased from policy debates and that the protections, resources, and opportunities they depend on are not lost in the shifting tides of political power.

FAITH & ADVOCACY

1 Faith & Advocacy is Critical

Faith is critical to federal policy because religion continues to shape the moral imagination, civic values, and lived experiences of millions of people across the United States. Elected officials and policymakers cannot ignore the reality that faith communities represent some of the largest and most organized constituencies in the country. These communities mobilize voters, provide social services, and serve as trusted voices in local contexts where federal policy is felt most directly.

Faith advocacy ensures that public policy reflects not only political and economic interests but also deeply held values around justice, dignity, and the common good. Without the engagement of faith leaders, debates on issues like healthcare, immigration, civil rights, and religious freedom risk being dominated by narrow or exclusionary interpretations of religion. Including diverse faith perspectives—especially affirming ones—broadens the moral framework of policymaking, challenges harmful narratives, and protects vulnerable populations who often rely on faith communities for sanctuary and support. In short, faith brings moral authority, organized power, and a human-centered lens that is indispensable in shaping equitable and inclusive federal policy.

2 Faith and Policy in Affirming Spaces

Affirming faith spaces especially need this advocacy. They are home to LGBTQ+ people, women seeking reproductive care, immigrants, and others who rely on faith communities for sanctuary and support. Yet these spaces face real threats—from laws that try to silence inclusive voices to policies that force them to choose between compassion and compliance. By speaking out, affirming leaders prove that faith can be both inclusive and courageous. Their advocacy protects vulnerable people, preserves the witness of inclusive religious traditions, and ensures that debates about faith and freedom are not dominated by exclusion alone.

3 The Importance of Interfaith Advocacy

When people of different faiths come together, they remind the world that no one tradition stands alone. Together, they form a powerful voice for justice that reflects the beauty of a diverse democracy. Interfaith advocacy shows that inclusion isn't just a social idea—it's a spiritual calling shared across many traditions.

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119TH

SPONSORED BILLS & STATUS

126

Days in Session

282

Number of Votes

400

Passed

6483

Measures Enacted

Criminal Justice

H.R. 2009 – Global Criminal Justice Act: Interpretation: Creates a State Department office to help prevent genocide and prosecute international crimes.

Impact:  Beneficial – prioritizes human rights and accountability, potentially protecting refugees and diaspora communities.

S. 2705 – Keep Violent Criminals Off Our Streets Act: Interpretation: Cuts federal funding to states that reform or eliminate cash bail.

Impact:  Harmful – cash bail disproportionately affects poor and minority defendants who can't afford release.

H.R. 4922 – D.C. CRIMES Act of 2025: Interpretation: Rolls back some local reforms, raising sentences and reducing youth-offender protections.

Impact:  Harmful – increases incarceration of Black and brown youth in D.C.

H.R. 5140 – D.C. Juvenile Sentencing Reform Act: Interpretation: Expands prosecution of minors in adult courts.

Impact:  Harmful – worsens school-to-prison pipeline, impacts vulnerable youth.

H.R. 3815 – True Justice Act of 2025: Interpretation: Broad criminal-justice package, likely raising penalties and limiting parole.

Impact:  Harmful – reduces chances for rehabilitation, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities.

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† Faith-Based

S. 2825 – Faith/Community-Based Health Grants: Interpretation: Allows HHS to fund faith-based orgs to address health inequities.

Impact: Beneficial – could expand grassroots health services in underserved areas, if nondiscriminatory.

H.R. 5417 – Faith/Community-Based Health Grants: Interpretation: House companion bill with same aim.

Impact: Beneficial – similar potential to strengthen community-led health responses.

H.R. 4766 – Faithful Patriot Campaign Medal Act: Interpretation: Creates a medal recognizing faith-based contributions to patriotism.

Impact: Mixed – Symbolic; could uplift faith groups, but does little for material needs of vulnerable people.

H.R. 253 – Restoring Faith in Government Act: Interpretation: Promotes ethics and accountability in government.

Impact: Beneficial – indirectly supports marginalized groups by fighting corruption that siphons resources.

H.Res. 738 – Concern over Restrictions on Religious Freedom Abroad: Interpretation: Symbolic resolution opposing persecution of religious groups worldwide.

Impact: Beneficial – shines light on global persecution, which can support asylum seekers.

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Reproductive

S. 186 – No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act: Interpretation: Permanently bans federal abortion funding.

Impact: **✗** Harmful – limits low-income women’s access to reproductive health.

H.R. 7 – House version of S. 186: Interpretation: Mirrors Senate bill.

Impact: **✗** Harmful – same impact on poor women, especially women of color.

H.R. 2469 – Abortion DOUGLAS Act: Interpretation: Creates broad federal restrictions on abortion.

Impact: **✗** Harmful – undermines state-level protections, reduces access nationwide.

S. 242 – Dignity for Aborted Children Act: Interpretation: Requires fetal remains be buried/cremated.

Impact: **✗** Harmful – increases cost and stigma for patients and clinics.

H.R. 21 – Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act: Interpretation: Mandates treatment/reporting for infants born alive after abortion attempts.

Impact: **✗** Harmful – stigmatizes abortion providers, even though such cases are extremely rare.

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 LGBTQIA+

126

Days in Session

S. 2201 – LGBTQ+ Panic Defense Prohibition Act: Interpretation: Bans “panic defenses” in violent-crime cases.

Impact:  Beneficial – protects LGBTQ victims from legal bias.

H.R. 4197 – House version of S. 2201: Interpretation: Same as above.

Impact:  Beneficial – expands protection against hate-based defenses.

282

Number of Votes

S. 1957 – No Place for LGBTQ+ Hate Act: Interpretation: Improves DOJ/community response to hate crimes.

Impact:  Beneficial – directs resources toward protecting LGBTQ people.

H.R. 3708 – House version of S. 1957: Interpretation: Same focus on anti-LGBTQ hate incidents.

Impact:  Beneficial – strengthens protections at community level.

400

Passed

H.R. 28 – Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act: Interpretation: Bars trans girls/women from participating in female-designated sports.

Impact:  Harmful – targets trans youth, increases marginalization.

6483

Measures Enacted

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Passed

6483

Measures Enacted

Health Care

S. 46 – Health Care Affordability Act of 2025: Interpretation: Makes ACA subsidies permanent.

Impact:  Beneficial – improves affordability of coverage for low-income families.

H.R. 3864 – Protecting Health Care for All Patients Act: Interpretation: Prohibits use of QALYs in health programs. Impact: Mixed – protects disabled communities from discriminatory metrics but may raise costs and limit coverage.

S. 1709 – Nurse Staffing Standards Act: Interpretation: Sets safe nurse-to-patient ratios.

Impact:  Beneficial – improves care quality and safety, especially for vulnerable patients.

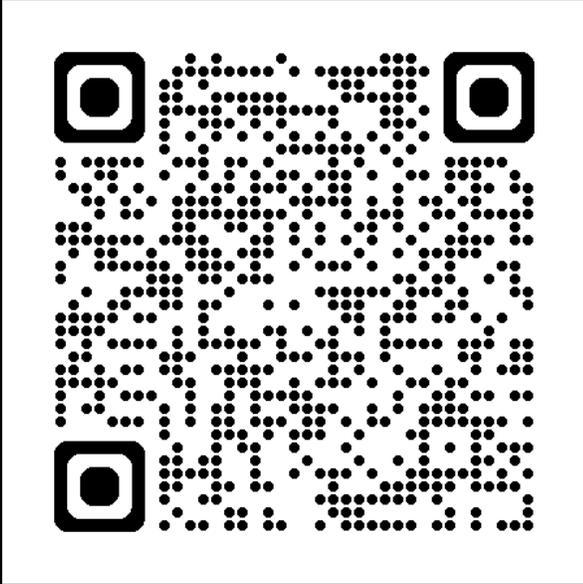
H.R. 1 – One Big Beautiful Bill Act: Interpretation: Omnibus law with cuts and eligibility changes in Medicaid/ACA.

Impact:  Harmful – risks reducing access for low-income and marginalized populations.

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**WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN
OUR PROGRAMS**