

Southern Baptist panel to open legal records for abuse probe

by [Peter Smith](#) in the [November 3, 2021](#) issue

The Southern Baptist Convention's executive committee agreed on October 5 to open up legally protected records to investigators who will look into how it handled, or mishandled, cases of sexual abuse within the nation's largest Protestant denomination over the past two decades.

The third vote on the matter in less than three weeks reversed two previous ones that would have maintained attorney-client privilege. Waiving that privilege is considered crucial to enabling a transparent reckoning into how the denomination's leaders responded to abuse and abusers in its churches and institutions.

The 44-31 vote followed unsuccessful efforts to negotiate a compromise and the resignation of several board members who had previously opposed the waiver.

Pressure on the executive committee had built from within the denomination, with groups of pastors saying a refusal to heed opinions on the attorney-client privilege issue could jeopardize trust among rank-and-file Baptists. They also said it could put at risk donations to the convention's unified budget, which funds seminaries and missionaries. —Associated Press