

## Save the Date!!

Kalamazoo Right to Life's Annual  
Focus on Life Dinner

Guest Speaker:  
John Bursch

May 2, 2024

Attorney with Alliance Defending Freedom  
former Michigan Solicitor General, has argued  
12 cases before the US Supreme Court

More details to follow in our next issue of Lifeline.

## Oratory Contest for High School Students

All Kalamazoo County high school students are invited to compete in the 2024 Oratory Speech Contest. Students are required to prepare a 5-7 minute original speech on the topics of: abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, and embryonic stem cell research. Local judges will award the top three winners. The first place winner advances to the state Right to Life of Michigan Oratory Contest.

The local contest is scheduled for **Saturday, March 23**. It will be held at Christian Assembly of God, 7835 Lovers Lane, Portage, MI 49002. Chairing this event is our treasurer Candy Courtney. She will be contacting area schools and home-schooling groups to drum up support.

## Membership Renewal Time

In a few days or weeks you will be receiving a letter in the mail to encourage you to renew your membership with Kalamazoo Right to Life. This is a very important year for our state and nation. We will be electing a new president as well as a new senator in Michigan. Members of Congress, state reps, governors...everything is on the line in who will lead of nation. Pro-lifers need to band together as never before to elect pro-lifers. I think Ben Franklin once said during the Revolutionary War period, "If we don't all hang together, we will most assuredly all hang separately." Your membership ensures that by sticking together, we have a better chance of educating the public on the life issues, and elect lawmakers in line with our pro-life convictions. If we don't vote, we lose. Look for that letter and respond today!

# 2023 Year in Review

## 1. Reproductive Health Act guts 40 years of pro-life laws

It has been said that elections have consequences. That was never more true than when Michigan's voters elected pro-abortion majorities in the 2022 mid-term election. Though the majorities were slim (20 to 18 in the Senate, and 56 to 54 in the House), those margins were enough to wreak havoc on the state's pro-life laws. With Governor Gretchen Whitmer acting as principle cheerleader, the radical pro-abortion lawmakers in Lansing were ready to make their move. The beginning of their drive to purge pro-life laws came in November, 2022 when abortion rights were enshrined in the Michigan Constitution with passage of Proposal 3. However, pro-abortion legislation was "needed" to put teeth to Prop 3. Subsequently, the state's lawmakers repealed our 1846/1931 law that had prohibited abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Our law, while upheld by the state Supreme Court as legal, was not enforced for 50 years during the *Roe v. Wade* period. Once *Dobbs* overturned *Roe*, our old law should have taken effect again...immediately. However, state court judges stepped in to block it. And the consequences of our law taking effect again in Michigan was the primary motivation for the pro-abortion petition drive that led to Proposal 3. In September, 2023, pro-abortion lawmakers introduced the Reproductive Health Act, (RHA)— an 11-bill piece of legislation that would repeal almost all of our pro-life laws enacted since the late-1970s. The bill was stalled in the State House when one Democrat (Karen Whitsett from Detroit) opposed two bills during a crucial committee vote: to eliminate informed consent with the 24-hour waiting period, and repeal our law that banned taxpayer funding for abortions. Because the Democrats controlled the House by a narrow two-vote majority, the loss of one vote (Whitsett's) would result in a 55 to 55 vote. A tie vote would defeat the bill. During the next few weeks, many House Democrats applied pressure on Whitsett to conform to Democratic party orthodoxy and change her vote. The plan failed. During the House's inaction, the State Senate passed all 11 bills along party lines 20 to 18. In early November, the House finally voted on the RHA. As expected, nine of the 11 bills passed; the lone Democrat voted with pro-lifers on the two bills she originally opposed. The pro-life laws that were repealed include: the partial birth abortion ban, the abortion insurance opt-out law, clinic licensing, moving family planning money away from abortion providers, abortion reporting, abortion complication reporting, humane disposal of fetal remains. The one law that was not added to RHA was one to repeal parental consent. Though pro-abortion Democrats want to strike this law as well, they know that the majority of Michigan voters support the common-sense parental consent regulation.

## 2. Ohio pro-lifers are defeated with Issue 1

In November, voters in Ohio passed a pro-abortion referendum called Issue 1. Similar to Michigan's Proposal 3

back in 2022, Issue 1 enshrined abortion rights in the Ohio Constitution. A few months earlier, pro-life lawmakers attempted to derail certain aspects of Issue 1 when they set a statewide vote. Pro-lifers argued that since federal constitutional changes require a two-thirds support, any state constitutional change should require at least a 60 percent threshold and not a simple majority. However, voters rejected this earlier vote. In the run-up to the November vote, pro-abortion forces out-spent the pro-life coalition two-to-one. They were able to twist, distort and mislead voters on the dangerous consequences of making abortion legal in Ohio. The pro-abortion strategy of placing constitutional amendments before the voters has worked in key states (Michigan and Ohio the most notable). As we round out the year, pro-abortion activists in Florida recently launched a petition drive to do the same in the Sunshine State. They need to gather 900,000 valid signatures by February, 2024 to place an abortion-rights proposal on the November, 2024 ballot. It would be similar to the referendums passed in Michigan and Ohio. There is one possible glitch in their effort. By law, a state constitutional amendment needs support from 60 percent of the vote, a very high threshold to achieve. Even voters in Michigan and Ohio did not endorse Prop 3 or Issue 1 by percentages that high. That bodes well for pro-lifers in Florida.

## 3. March for Life: a great success

On November 8, over 5,000 pro-lifers of all ages attended the first March for Life held in front of the state capitol building in Lansing. The date was the one-year anniversary of the November, 2022 when voters approved the disastrous Proposal 3 that amended the state constitution to guarantee abortion rights. Though the weather was wet and cold, the attendees were energized by the day's activities. The crowd was inspired by uplifting Christian music prior to the rally. Several speakers encouraged the audience to stand strong in defending the unborn. RLM president Barb Listing announced that the state group had joined 15 other pro-life and pro-family groups to challenge the constitutionality of Proposal 3 in federal court. After the hour long rally, all 5,000+ participants marched three blocks to the Hall of Justice before turning a corner and returning to the capitol. The event was peaceful and there were no counter-demonstrators. The March for Life was a great success.

## 4. Campaign 2024: Pro-life Republicans v. Pro-abortion Joe Biden

Next year is the all-important 2024 election. As the presidential primaries fast approach, we can evaluate the status of the current GOP and Democratic candidates seeking the White House. All the Republican candidates are pro-life. Former US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley and Florida governor Ron DeSantis (the two leading candidates in the second tier) continue to trail front-runner Donald Trump by wide margins. The former president is facing legal woes concerning a variety of "alleged indictments" that may or may not materialize next year. Equally troubling (and utterly

unconstitutional), the Colorado Supreme Court and Maine's Secretary of State announced in late December that Trump's name will not appear on their state primary ballots due to a very incorrect reading of the 14th Amendment. No doubt the US Supreme Court will overturn those decisions. As of now, Joe Biden is the only Democratic candidate. An unknown congressman from Minnesota is challenging the president but party officials have already announced that there will be no debates and only Biden's name will appear on ballots in the primaries. Two other independent candidates (both pro-abortion) can cut into Biden's vote count: Professor Cornel West of the Green party and former Democrat-turned-independent Robert Kennedy, Jr. Another group called No Labels is looking into the possibility of nominating a compromise candidate, possibly West Virginia senator Joe Manchin, a moderate Democrat with a mixed voting record on abortion, who is not running for reelection in his home state. With Biden's record as president, his failed policies on multiple fronts, and declining health—all issues more noticeable in 2023 than before, there is an excellent chance that he will be defeated in 2024 by a pro-life challenger.

#### **5. Supreme Court agrees to hear case on abortion drug mifepristone**

In April, US District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk in Texas issued a ruling on the chemical abortion drug mifepristone. He suspended the FDA's approval of the drug. The same day, another federal judge in Washington State issued an opposite ruling on mifepristone. A week after Kacsmaryk's decision, the Court of Appeals of the Fifth Circuit New Orleans reversed portions of the ruling, but upheld other sections. The Supreme Court did not intervene but issued a stay on the Fifth Circuit's decision. At issue is when can the drug be prescribed. When mifepristone was approved by the FDA in 2000, the drug could be prescribed in person, over three visits to a doctor, and in the first seven weeks of pregnancy. In 2016, the FDA altered its policy. Patients could now obtain prescriptions through telemedicine, in the mail, and used in the first ten weeks of pregnancy. The Biden administration and Danco, the drug's manufacturer, filed suit to challenge the Fifth Circuit's ruling. In mid-December, the Supreme Court agreed to review the appellate court's decision. The case will be heard in the spring of 2024.

#### **6. Pro-lifers under-perform in elections in Kentucky and Virginia**

Issue 1 was not the only pro-life defeat in the few elections held in November, 2023. In Kentucky, Daniel Cameron, the state's current attorney general, ran for governor against incumbent Andy Beshear. Considered a rising star in GOP circles, many pro-lifers expected him to win the gubernatorial race. However, Cameron was defeated. In Virginia, Governor Glenn Youngkin believed that President Biden's unpopularity could well translate to Republican wins in state elections. GOP strategists hoped to flip the state Senate and retain control of the state House. However, Democrats maintained their majority of the Senate and took control of the House, thus

dashing the governor's chances of pushing his more conservative policies. The November elections continued a series of pro-life setbacks since the June, 2022 *Dobbs* decision that reversed *Roe v. Wade*.

#### **7. Pro-life bills pass in several states**

Several conservative state legislatures took advantage of the 2022 *Dobbs* decision to enact new pro-life laws in 2023. In April, Florida passed a 6-week fetal heartbeat bill after having already passed a law the previous year to fix abortion at 15 weeks. That same month, Kansas passed a bill that required doctors and other staff to provide medical care for babies who survived abortions. After the governor vetoed the bill, the legislature overrode the veto. Also in April, North Dakota revised the wording of its own 6-week heartbeat law. In May, two more states passed pro-life laws. The Montana legislature enacted a series of bills that included a born-alive bill, a ban on dismemberment abortions, conscience clause protections, and provisions to prohibit taxpayer funding for abortions. North Carolina passed a bill that limited abortions to the 12th week of pregnancy. The bill was vetoed by the pro-abortion governor but was overridden by pro-life lawmakers.

#### **8. Pro-Life activist acquitted of FACE Act violation**

In January, pro-lifer Mark Houck was tried in a Pennsylvania court for violating the FACE Act, a 1994 law that imposed prison sentences if anyone blocked an entrance to an abortion clinic or prevented a clinic employee from full access to the building. Houck was charged with knocking down a clinic escort outside a Philadelphia abortion facility. Though no charges were brought when the incident occurred in 2021, the Biden Justice Department arrested him in 2022 in a brazen FBI raid at the Houck home. The post-script to this story is revealing: it took the jury just one hour to find Houck not guilty of all charges.

#### **9. Pro-abortion radical is convicted of vandalizing pregnancy care center**

On the surface, this may not have been a top ten story, but the arrest and conviction of a Bowling Green University student who vandalized a pregnancy care center in Bowling Green, Ohio may have been the FIRST in 2023. Since the leaked draft of the *Dobbs* opinion back in May of 2022, over 250 pro-life offices, pregnancy care centers, or churches have been vandalized: broken windows, spray-painted messages on walls, molotov cocktails tossed, statutes defaced. The Biden Department of Justice, while claiming to do its best to find and prosecute these radical pro-abortion activists, have done little to nothing to investigate. In early December, the student plead guilty to a federal misdemeanor charge under the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACE Act, see #7). Whitney Durant defaced the front of the center with several pro-abortion messages painted on the wall. A sentencing hearing is scheduled for April. He may face a year in prison.

**10. Barb Listing retires as RLM president**

Right to Life of Michigan president Barb Listing announced in mid-December that she would retire at the end of the year. Barb has been president since 1980. She also serves as Michigan's representative on the Board of Directors of the National Right to Life Committee. She is recognized by pro-life leaders across the country as one of the most effective and accomplished in the movement. Although she is stepping down as president, Barb will continue to serve on the RLM PAC and serve in other capacities. As her replacement, the Board of Directors elected Amber Roseboom as the new president. Amber has been serving as RLM Vice-President of Operations.



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