

President Bush and the Pro-Life Movement. Was He Supportive During his First Term?

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PINE BLUFFS – Now that the dust has settled and George W. Bush has been re-elected, the pro-life movement can breathe a collective sigh of relief. John Kerry, a Catholic, had been an enthusiastic supporter of abortion while in the Senate, repeatedly voting against parental notification of a minor's abortion and, six times, against the ban on partial birth abortion. Had he been elected, those opposed to abortion would have suffered a setback.

Mr. Bush, however, drew enthusiastic applause from large crowds nationwide when talking about moral values and "the culture of life," a phrase borrowed from John Paul II.

Was this merely empty campaign rhetoric? The answer is "No!" George Bush, early and often during his first term, supported life issues.

In fact, Mr. Bush's first pro-life action took place on January 22, 2001, just two days after his inauguration. Since then, he's taken over seventy steps in support of life.

What was the first thing he did? He signed an executive order reinstating the Mexico City Policy. This policy was originally announced by President Reagan in 1984 at an international population conference in Mexico City. It required that to receive funds under the population control aid program overseen by the Agency for International Development (USAID), private overseas organizations would henceforth have to agree not to perform abortions, except to save the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest, and not to promote abortion as a method of family planning – by campaigning to weaken or repeal the pro-life laws of foreign nations.

Former President Clinton's first official act pertaining to pro-life matters was also an executive order, in January 1993. But his, in stark contrast, overturned that same Mexico City Policy, which had also been in force under George H. W. Bush.

Signing that order was not merely a symbolic act by Mr. Bush. He had to work to maintain it. Learning that USAID implementation rules are reviewable by the Senate under the Congressional Review Act (CRA), and that the Senate planned to void the rule, he issued a second executive order in March 2001 that included the USAID implementation rule. Executive orders are *not* subject to challenge by Congress under the CRA. This effectively outflanked the pro-abortion Senate and allowed time for the more pro-life House to act.

It did. In May 2001, it removed language from a State Department authorization bill that would have overturned the Mexico City Policy, thereby reaffirming Republican opposition for funding overseas groups that perform abortions or use abortion as a means of birth control.

The Bush Administration has taken more than seventy actions in favor of life, including efforts to seat pro-life advocates on international panels, nominating pro-life judges, banning federal funds for human cloning, promoting abstinence programs, proposing health insurance coverage for unborn children, and signing the *Born Alive Infant's Protection Act*.

One of Mr. Bush's actions in early 2004 was to appoint Ellen Sauerbray, a Republican legislator from Maryland who narrowly lost two gubernatorial elections to a pro-abortion advocate, as a Special Ambassador to the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women. Her assignment? To insure that motherhood was not demeaned as a career in the UN's new document on women. So effective was Sauerbray that she was jeered by radical feminist members of other delegations during the debates.

In his first term, President Bush nominated many pro-life judges to the federal bench. Among them was Miguel Estrada, nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of

Columbia, Priscilla Owens, nominated to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals, and William Pryor, nominated to the Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit. However, kowtowing to its base supporters like NARAL and other pro-abortion groups, Senate Democrats consistently blocked consideration of these and other nominations. At least one, Mr. Pryor, formerly Attorney General of Alabama, was recess appointed by Mr. Bush. Another, Brook Smith, was finally confirmed for the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals. Newly re-elected, Mr. Bush plans to re-nominate at least twenty of these well-qualified people.

In March 2003, the Senate passed the *Partial Birth Abortion Ban* sponsored by Senator Rick Santorum (R., PA), a tireless pro-life fighter. Unfortunately, it added an amendment sponsored by Senator Harkin (D., IA) endorsing *Roe v. Wade* as the law of the land and cautioning that it not be overturned. This required referral to a House-Senate Conference Committee, where that language was erased. The ban was passed and Mr. Bush signed it. However, at this writing, Democrats, knowing that liberal judges are generally sympathetic to their causes, have challenged it in the Courts of California and New York, precluding its implementation. Perhaps now, since Mr. Bush received more votes than any other presidential candidate in history — almost 59 million — his new attorney general will forcefully intervene in these cases.

Also in 2003, Congress considered the *Unborn Victims of Violence Act*, known as the *Laci and Connor Peterson Act*. This statute, passed in response to the murder of his wife and unborn child by California resident Scott Peterson, recognizes unborn children as separate persons and legal victims when they are killed during commission of federal crimes. But Senate Democrats, among them Tom Daschle (D., SD), Barbara Boxer (D., CA) and Patti Murray (D., WA), mounted a delaying campaign to prevent it from reaching the floor. The tactic was finally defeated and a vote was taken. Guess who voted against it? Senator Kerry, who, in a campaign

interview, claimed that he now believes “life begins at conception.” Trouble is, he doesn’t believe it is human life. In this, he has been consistent with other Democrats in opposing life issues.

Going back to 2002, among Bush Administration pro-life initiatives that year were *The Child Custody Protection Act*, which makes it a crime to take a minor across a state line to procure an abortion if this precludes parents from being involved under provisions of their own state law, and *The Abortion Non-Discrimination Act*, prohibiting any state or local government from discriminating against health care providers for refusing to offer abortions. These initiatives prompted an October ‘02 article in *The Boston Globe*, of all places, entitled, “President Bush is building a strong, pro-life record.”

With these and numerous other pro-life actions, Mr. Bush has demonstrated a more clearly defined moral instinct and management style when aiding the pro-life cause than any president in American history. No room for doubt. Even Ronald Reagan didn’t do as much in the battle to defend the sanctity of human life.

During his first term, Mr. Bush gave Christians no cause to sit this election out. They didn’t. Post election polling showed that Christians turned out in record numbers to mark their ballots for Mr. Bush, especially in Ohio and Florida, thereby playing a role in his re-election.

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