

FAITH MATTERS

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WILL CONGRESS FIND ITS PRO-LIFE MOJO?

BY ELIZABETH GRAHAM



While the Republican leadership in Washington, DC, trips over each other to assure voters of their Pro-Life bonafides, the election of Donald J. Trump offers a reprieve from the relentless assaults on Life that have spewed from the White House since January of 2009. Whether or not the President-Elect meets our vision as a conservative, or a Christian, or a Pro-Lifer, I'm confident that he will not be calculating the erosion of free speech, religious freedoms, nor the sanctity of human life during his every waking moment.

The task of activists, voters, and Pro-Life advocates now is to push our elected officials to move: to move aggressively, to move measures that protect our faith, our family, and our freedoms, and to move protections for the unborn. We must not assume that the Republican majority will prioritize the issues nearest and dearest to our own hearts. We must hold them accountable now more than ever.

In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed Texas Right to Life's bill to protect unborn children who can feel pain from abortion at five months gestation. This type of law includes several components that cannot be severed from any worthy Pro-Life law:

- the pain law draws attention to the humanity of the unborn;
- the pain law drives the cultural conversation in a positive direction;
- the pain law chips away at the foundation of *Roe vs. Wade*; and

- most important, the pain law actually stops many abortions. This law has saved lives in Texas.

As expected, the US Congress is trying to keep up with Texas. They are working on the Pain-Capable-Unborn-Child-Protection Act, which is a ban at five months when the child does indisputably feel pain. The challenge in Congress will be to keep the language of the bill strong and without weakening provisions. The abortion folks hate this bill. They will not launch a court challenge on this measure because the only take-away from media stories is that the child may feel the pain of the procedure.

Abortion executives saving for that Lamborghini would rather avoid a prolonged news cycle and the consequent, dreaded cultural conversation about the unborn child's capacity to feel pain. Such distasteful public relations hits the bottom line of the abortion industry hard.

Congress also is now trying to out-Pro-Life each other in defunding Planned Parenthood — a feat that Texas has mostly already accomplished. The abortion giant receives over half a billion dollars of our tax money, despite the fact that they hold double that amount in assets, are in the midst of congressional and criminal investigations, and have been documented breaking laws selling baby body parts.

While defunding efforts are com-



mendable, even our strongest Pro-Life members become lost in the politics of the budget bills, the continuing resolutions, and the reconciliation process.

When “regular” appropriations bills fail to pass, Congress often resorts to a “continuing resolution” – known as a “CR” – to maintain operations of either all or some programs. The CR that recently cleared Congress was signed by the president on September 29th, just thirty-six hours before the end of fiscal 2016. That CR funded all government agencies through December 9th, thus requiring another budget action known as the reconciliation process to secure funding of the government for the remainder of the fiscal year.

A reconciliation bill includes changes in law recommended in a

budget resolution to further fund a program. In other words, in order to continue funding for a program, new legislative strings are attached in reconciliation bills.

The leadership in the United States Senate is now promising that these reconciliation crumbs will sate us ravenous Pro-Lifers. Although the leaders of the US Senate recognize the undeniable sanctity of innocent human life, their Pro-Life mojo dissolves when addressing budget and spending rules. They will enthusiastically vote for safeguards for pregnant women and unborn children; they will vote to ban and limit abortions (AND SHOULD BE THANKED FOR SUCH ACTIONS), but they grow surprisingly befuddled about disqualifying from eligibility the very entities that commit these atrocities. After all the recent proof about the

carnage inside the walls of abortion clinics, after all the criminal indictments and law-breaking, the federal funding rules for abortion clinics still have not changed at all. AT. ALL.

Just this past September in a meeting thought to be off the record, one of the US senators from Texas was asked about the funding situation. His response: “I think we’re in the sweet spot with funding for Planned Parenthood.” “Sweet spot?” “Sweet spot?” With half a billion dollars of taxpayer money going to an organization that is riddled with scandal and corruption, not to mention death and destruction — that is a “sweet spot?”

If documented criminal activity of chopping up children and selling them for profit isn’t horrific grounds enough to lose eligibility for public funding once and for all, America will never heal from the scourge of abortion, the blood of our unborn brothers and sisters ever staining our hearts and souls.

President-Elect Trump’s nomination of Congressman Tom Price, M.D., (R-GEORGIA) as Secretary of Health and Human Services demonstrates Mr. Trump’s resolve to dismantle ObamaCare and to enact Pro-Life policies. Dr. Price has achieved high rankings as a Pro-Life lawmaker, a freedom-fighter, and a man whose values are manifest in his public policy positions.

Both President-Elect Trump and Dr. Price face an uphill battle in advancing Pro-Life policies, but the country is aching for such unwavering advocacy and would galvanize quickly behind true moral courage absent from Washington, DC. Together, the two can lead effectively on defunding the abortion industry and Planned Parenthood by changing eligibility rules.

President-Elect Trump must champion protecting unborn children who feel the torturous pain of abortion at five months of development. Another winning issue is to stop the barbaric procedure of dismembering live, unborn children — a measure that would dramatically curtail, if not end, Planned Parenthood’s harvesting and trafficking of baby body parts. President-Elect Trump has indicated that he is willing and open to protect unborn children, including through his appointees to the Supreme Court of the United States.

Even if President-Elect Trump is ambivalent at worst (AND I GIVE HIM MORE CREDIT THAN NEUTRALITY), this is the first window open in many years through which Pro-Life policies can be driven. This is the sweet spot for Pro-Lifers and for conservatives, and President-Elect Trump and his team have already laid the groundwork to make America great again by returning us toward a country that values and protects life — born and unborn.



ELIZABETH GRAHAM

Born and raised in Kansas City, Elizabeth graduated from Rockhurst College there. In 1994, Elizabeth moved to Houston, Texas to pursue graduate studies at the University of St. Thomas.

Elizabeth and her husband were married in 1997, and she left retail management and accepted full-time employment with Texas Right to Life in September of 1998. They and their staff of 28 have grown Texas Right to Life into the largest Pro-Life organization in Texas with a membership of over 250,000 households.

Under her leadership, Texas Right to Life has spearheaded the passage of historic pro-life laws, including significantly defunding the abortion industry in Texas. In addition to expanding Life-affirming options to abortion-vulnerable women, through Texas Right to Life's Family Assistance Program, Elizabeth has advocated for and worked with countless families whose ailing loved ones faced difficult medical ethics decisions and the futility process at hospitals across Texas.

Elizabeth is drawn to the Pro-Life cause because she has seen the devastation caused by abortion in the lives of women who have made that tragic choice.



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