



Carrying Our Weight in the Pro-Life Movement

The pro-life movement is losing ground, and Latter-day Saints have both reason and duty to help reverse it.

By Ryan Strong

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Since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, the fight over abortion's legal status in each state has raged on. For the pro-life movement, it's not going well. The movement has lost nearly all of the [state ballots and referendums](#) aimed at restricting abortion. In [Florida](#), abortion restrictions only survived because the state failed to reach the the 60% supermajority required to enshrine abortion rights into the state constitution, demonstrating the unpopularity of abortion restrictions among even nominally conservative voters.

Radical abortion policies that would allow abortion late in pregnancy are being implemented across the country as secular feminists and the governments they control

go for broke, leaving the pro-life movement in the dust. For example, abortion has been enshrined as a right in the [Colorado state constitution](#), making near-unlimited abortion part of the state's highest law. In 2024, pro-life measures were [outspent](#) approximately 14 to 1.

It is time for a candid assessment of our role as Latter-day Saints in the pro-life movement. Latter-day Saints have a special duty to oppose abortion and to stand for life through activism, legislation, and volunteering. The movement against abortion needs all the help it can get, and now is the time to act.

I cannot exceed [Terryl Givens](#) in eloquence or force of argument, which he articulated against abortion in these pages. In particular, he highlighted the fallacy of being personally opposed to abortion but pro-choice politically. He said:

There is no more ethical or logical sense in being “personally opposed, but pro-choice” than in being personally opposed to sex trafficking, slavery, or child abuse, “but” pro-choice regarding the adult's prerogatives in those cases. Abortion is not like heavy drinking or pornography or blaspheming, where one deplores the action but accords another the right to act immorally. Abortion is of that class of wrongs that entails the willful infliction of pain or killing on another human being. Ultimately, the pro-life position is not a commitment predicated on sectarian values or God's precepts. It is the fruit of a more universal commitment to protect the most vulnerable and voiceless. It is a commitment to the most fundamental obligation we have as part of the human family: to defend the defenseless.

It struck me how little presence Latter-day Saints had at this year's March for Life in Washington, D.C. I saw no signs identifying participants as members of the Church, though I understand [Latter-day Saints for Life](#) were there. I also recently attended a pro-life event hosted by the David Network for Ivy League students. Of the 400 participants, only four were members of their school's Latter-day Saint Student Associations.

Some of our distinguished members have lost sight of the grave evil of abortion. Indeed, the only [Latter-day Saint billionaire](#) who has commented publicly on abortion did so to assure members and staff of a new sports team in Utah that they would be refunded for

any out-of-state abortion they received. Such lacunae disappoint me, as we as a people generally punch above our weight. We're often educated, intelligent, organized, and capable. Most importantly, we have priesthood power and the gift of the Holy Ghost. So why are we hesitating to stand for life?

Why Do We Hesitate?

Some Latter-day Saints may shy away from opposing abortion because the issue is viewed as too political or partisan. By virtue of standing for life, they believe they may signal association with a political party with which they do not necessarily agree. Yet lately, neither political party seriously supports the pro-life movement. The Trumpian GOP increasingly substitutes radical nationalism (and, in some cases, white ethnonationalism) for serious pro-life social policy. The Democrats have not supported unborn children for a long time, and that has accelerated with the fall of [Roe](#). Now is the time to depoliticize and to show that [the desire](#) to protect the life of a child cuts across all political and social categories.

Others are concerned that women will suffer from abortion bans due to uncertainty about the legality of abortion in medical emergencies. This concern is over-stated. Even in the most stringent states, such as Texas, abortion is allowed in the case of medical emergencies. Pro-life supporters care about protecting emergency care for women. To emphasize the point, Texas [recently amended](#) its law to ensure that doctors know they can provide abortion when a woman's health is gravely threatened. The claim that women will die en masse because of abortion bans simply is not true and ignores the real threat to life: the killing of the unborn by abortion.

Some Latter-day Saints might hide behind the idea of being a peacemaker. Of course, we should be peacemakers. Those who support abortion are human beings, too, deserving the love and respect that are inherent in our shared identity as children of God. There is no need to add to the screaming match on the internet to defend the right of a child to life. However, merely emphasizing our role in peacemaking ignores the Savior's own example. He fearlessly confronted those who taught evil and did not back down, even at the cost of His own life. As disciples, we have a dual mandate to fight for the truth and to love our fellow man. We cannot sacrifice one for the other.

Some might hesitate to stand for life because it is difficult to fully align the Church's [position](#) with pro-life groups or policies, given that the Church contemplates exceptions for the health and life of the mother, rape and incest, and fetal inviability. Yet over [95 percent of abortions](#) are elective or have no reason specified for the abortion. Latter-day Saints and other Christian groups agree far more than they disagree on abortion. However, occasionally these differences can cause tensions and friction. I think the Church is wise, morally and politically, to acknowledge some possible exceptions (though not automatic dispensations) to its general opposition to abortion. And politically, many women will not support pro-life legislation that does not include rape exceptions, making it necessary to advance such legislation. In many states that ban abortion or ban it after six weeks, laws make allowances for the exceptions that the Church advocates. For example, Idaho, North Dakota, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, West Virginia, Mississippi, Iowa, and Indiana all provide exceptions [for rape](#), as will Utah if its law is implemented after the current [legal battle](#). There is ample room for the Church's position within the pro-life movement.

I think the final reason why many Latter-day Saints don't want to get involved is simpler and more embarrassing. The pro-life cause is gauche. It is unpopular with the rich and the powerful, the beautiful and charismatic. It feels embarrassing to be involved in, and it is a movement that higher minds scorn. It interferes with the unmitigated rights of adults to unlimited sexual pleasure. The cries of the great and spacious building are amplified by the high levels of education that many Latter-day Saints attain and their deep craving for acceptance. For a century, we have tried to assimilate into the mainstream and to be accepted. I will be blunt: that project is over. We cannot serve two masters, and we cannot assimilate to the ideology of secularism. The secular church that Elder Neal A. Maxwell [foresaw](#) has formed, and it will brook no opposition. It is time to stop worrying about what other people think, like an anxious teenager looking around at the popular kids, and stride forward out of adolescence and into maturity.

Current Ballot Initiatives

There are three states with significant Latter-day Saint populations where abortion will likely be on the ballot this fall: Missouri, Virginia, and Nevada. In Missouri, [voters will be asked](#) to repeal the current abortion regime that allows elective abortion [up to fetal viability](#) and replace it with one that prohibits elective abortion, while leaving exceptions for rape, incest, the life of the mother or serious health risks, and [fetal](#)

inviability. This aligns strongly, though not perfectly, with the **position** of The Church of Jesus Christ. The referendum that legalized elective abortion in Missouri succeeded narrowly. Organizing for this new referendum is crucial. The growing Latter-day Saint population in Missouri has an opportunity to stand for life.

In Virginia, an **amendment** that would enshrine elective abortion up to birth in the Virginia Constitution will be on the ballot. Defeating it would be a pro-life win, though, unfortunately, elective abortion is already allowed up to 26 weeks. Regardless, a large Latter-day Saint population exists in the D.C. suburbs of Virginia, allowing for serious and substantive action to stop this monstrous assault on life from passing.

In Nevada, another **amendment** would enshrine the right to elective abortion in the Nevada Constitution up to fetal viability. It already passed overwhelmingly in 2024, but it needs to pass again this year. With the large Latter-day Saint population in Nevada, I hope we can tip the scales and prevent this dark and disturbing practice from being enshrined in yet another state constitution.

Of course, even in states like Massachusetts and New York, the pro-life movement still needs volunteers and support. And in all states, young, scared single mothers still need support. Latter-day Saints have a role to play no matter where they live in the quest to protect unborn life.

Putting Our Shoulder to the Wheel

There are many evils in America, but abortion is unique. No matter how anyone tries to spin it, abortion is the intentional destruction of a real human being. In later stages of pregnancy, it is murder, though even early on, it is a grievous sin. It has no other parallel in modern America.

Above all, abortion strikes at the heart of the plan of salvation and the heart of the Church's task. It exists to enable the abuse of the sacred powers of procreation, and it turns the most loving of relationships—between mother and child—into violence and terror. We cannot accept our sacred priesthood responsibilities as a people without standing for the unborn. The temple, the pinnacle of the priesthood, binds families together. Abortion exists to destroy the family unit through violence, making it the antithesis of priesthood power.

As then [Elder Russell M. Nelson](#) taught about abortion, “It is a war on the defenseless—and the voiceless.” Abortion is frequently implemented to protect individuals from the consequences of their sexual promiscuity, men as well as women. Many who have the nerve to celebrate abortion see it as a triumph of liberation—a child sacrifice to my “freedom.” As [David Bentley Hart](#) has stated:

For me, it is enough to consider that, in America alone, more than forty million babies have been aborted since the Supreme Court invented the ‘right’ that allows for this, and that there are many for whom this is viewed not even as a tragic ‘necessity,’ but as a triumph of moral truth. When the Carthaginians were prevailed upon to cease sacrificing their babies, at least the place vacated by Baal reminded them that they should seek the divine above themselves; we offer up our babies to ‘my’ freedom of choice, to ‘me.’ No society’s moral vision has ever, surely, been more degenerate than that.

The current state of abortion’s legality is discouraging for those who prize life. But that is not an excuse for disengagement. Let us “do what is right, let the consequence follow.” Let us bid farewell to Babylon and stand strong against its temptations and seductions. And let us “put our shoulder to the wheel.” The battle will be long and hard, but it will be worth it to save the lives of the unborn and to frustrate Satan’s plans. “Come, come ye saints, no toil nor labor fear.”

About the author

Ryan Strong

Ryan Strong is an economics PhD student at Cornell University and a graduate of Brigham Young University, where he studied economics and mathematics.