



Pro-Life Optimism

in the Face of Abortion Extremism

Catherine Glenn Foster, M.A., J.D.¹

As President and CEO of Americans United for Life, America's founding national pro-life group (established in 1971), I travel extensively all across our nation; going up against abortion apologists on the debate stage; exposing Planned Parenthood and the abortion industry's dirty tricks and frequent total disregard for our nation's laws; and educating lawmakers and the good citizens of each state in support of life-saving legislation. Wherever I go, I'm asked for the reasons why I see tremendous promise for America's pro-life future.

I see firsthand that the pro-life movement is winning the battle for the U.S. Supreme Court, with two new pro-life Justices on the bench and the Court's breaking-news announcement that this term, the Justices will hear and decide on a pair of critical petitions from Louisiana. The cases relate to the Bayou State's common-sense law protecting women's health by ensuring a swift transfer from an abortion facility to an emergency room when abortions go wrong. In addition, the Court will also consider whether an abortionist can claim to represent his patients when he sues to overturn patient protections.

Even more critically, we are winning the battle for the hearts and minds of America. The fraying and stains on the 46-year-old rags of the abortion-on-demand law imposed nationwide in *Roe v. Wade* are becoming obvious to everyone, as the pro-life movement partners with women to offer them real hope and life-affirming solutions we can all live with. And indeed, not only do increasing numbers of Americans support humane abortion limitations and common-sense health and safety regulations, we also have saved *millions* of infants' lives over the past 25 years as the U.S. abortion rate—the number of pregnancies that end in abortion—has dropped to where it was in 1972, the year before *Roe*.

Now, to hear pro-abortion mainstream media outlets tell the story, abortion extremism seems to be winning out lately. New York's Reproductive Health Act (S. Bill 240/A. 21), signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo on January 22, 2019—the anniversary of the *Roe* decision—allows non-doctors to perform abortions throughout gestation, repeals New York's "Born Alive" law, and goes so far as to strip out the fetal homicide provisions of New York law, denying protections and justice for even "wanted" babies in the womb. Perhaps we should not be surprised by Governor Andrew Cuomo's celebration of abortion extremism, since he is merely carrying on the legacy begun by his father: former New York Governor Mario Cuomo, who virtually invented the politician's abortion dodge of being "personally opposed to abortion" while promoting its political fortunes. But Andrew Cuomo did his father one better by extending the elder Gov. Cuomo's uncharitable disdain for human life in the womb to pro-life humans outside of it, declaring that "extreme conservatives who are right-to-life... have no place in the state of New York."² Indeed, one wonders what more the Empire State could do to encourage women to have abortions, having already affirmed a state "fundamental right to abortion," used Medicaid funding to pay for elective abortions, turned a blind eye to the need for even basic health and safety regulations for abortion businesses, and lit up the Empire State Building pink to "celebrate" New York's commitment to abortion on demand.

¹ President & CEO, Americans United for Life. The author thanks AUL Legal Assistant Jesse Southerland – a native North Carolinian – for his able research assistance.

² <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/mario-cuomos-abortion-argument-is-a-bloody-legacy>

Not to be outdone by Governor Cuomo, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam (a physician) appeared on a Washington D.C. radio show on January 30th to advocate for Virginia's HB 2491, which, like New York's Reproductive Health Act, would have allowed abortion throughout the entirety of pregnancy—and even afterward. Attempting to justify infanticide, Gov. Northam said, "If a mother is in labor...the infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated *if that's what the mother and the family desired*, and then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and mother..."³

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper marched in lockstep with Governors Cuomo and Northam this year, vetoing SB 359, the "Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act," which would have provided protections for a child born alive during an abortion. And North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein added North Carolina to a federal lawsuit with twenty other states, challenging the Trump Administration's "Protect Life Rule," designed to keep federal family planning funds out of the hands of abortion businesses.⁴

But in spite of all this, according to the Centers for Disease Control, the number of abortions in New York has been dropping like a rock, as it has across the whole U.S., from 128,036 in 2007 to 93,096 in 2015. Over that period, the abortion rate dropped in Ohio by 27 percent and in Texas by 30 percent, and by similar amounts even in pro-abortion states like California, Hawaii, and New Hampshire.⁵ California, which has likewise vigorously promoted abortion and was, like New York, an early state to legalize abortion before *Roe*, has seen a 16 percent decline in the abortion rate between 2014 and 2017, from 19.5 to 16.4 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age.⁶ And North Carolina has shared in this promising trend, with a

3 percent decline in the abortion rate just between 2014 and 2017, despite the fact that it has one of the highest rates of abortion on out-of-state residents.⁷

The real story is that the country is becoming

The fraying and stains on the 46-year-old rags of the abortion-on-demand law imposed nationwide in *Roe v. Wade* are becoming obvious to everyone, as the pro-life movement partners with women to offer them real hope and life-affirming solutions we can all live with.

more pro-life, not less, and elected officials like Gov. Cuomo and Gov. Northam who support abortions up to the point of birth are the ones who are out of step. Gov. Northam's extreme pro-abortion bill failed in Virginia, and thanks to Americans United for Life and many others in the pro-life movement, radical pro-abortion bills also failed in New Mexico and Rhode Island in 2019. A similar measure introduced in North Carolina failed to even get a committee hearing, thanks to a strong pro-life movement led by our friends at the North Carolina Family Policy Council.

And that's not all. Not only are we winning against these ill-conceived bills promoting abortion extremism, but 2019 has been a record-breaking year for pro-life bills, with 46 states introducing life-affirming bills, and 58 of those bills in 22 states being signed into law. That's a 25 percent increase since 2018! And thanks to the "Protect Life Rule," Planned Parenthood is now out of the Title X family planning program. The nation's biggest abortion

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/failed-abortion-bill-draws-gop-outrage-against-va-gov-northam-democratic-lawmakers/2019/01/30/4a18f022-24b2-11e9-ad53-824486280311_story.html

⁴ See <https://ag.ny.gov/press-release/2019/21-states-sue-federal-government-title-x-gag-rule>.

⁵ See <https://www.apnews.com/7e45fe670cf45f1823a45ef9ad2187c>.

⁶ See <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/abortion-incidence-service-availability-us-2017>.

⁷ See <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-north-carolina>. In 2017, North Carolina had one of the highest shares of out-of-state abortions in the country at 18.5 percent. Rewire, "Abortion Patients Throughout the South are Traveling to North Carolina for Care," <https://rewire.news/article/2019/09/16/abortion-patients-across-the-south-are-traveling-to-north-carolina-for-care/>.

chain won't get any of those 7.25 million taxpayer dollars, and now North Carolina's community health care clinics are receiving them instead.⁸

We already knew that most Americans support these rollbacks of *Roe's* radical abortion regime. But in February 2019, as state legislatures were getting underway in their sessions, we decided to dig a little deeper into the views of self-described "pro-choice" Americans. Americans United for Life teamed up with YouGov to survey 1,145 Americans from coast to coast on their abortion views. And two weeks after New York enacted the Reproductive Health

We found out that fully two-thirds of self-identified "pro-choice" Americans oppose late-term abortions!

Act, and just a few days after Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's outrageous comments attempting to justify infanticide, we found out that fully two-thirds of self-identified "pro-choice" Americans oppose late-term abortions! Vast majorities of all Americans (79 percent) reject abortion in the third trimester and denying medical care to a viable child after birth (82 percent). This is unsurprising, given recent technological and medical advances, like advanced ultrasound, that reveal more clearly than ever before the inherent humanity of children in the womb.

Or perhaps the wave of opposition to New York-style abortion extremism stems from the well-recognized understanding—outside the Washington Beltway and the halls of our nation's leading Sunday papers, that is—that late-term abortion is rarely, if ever, needed for the sake of the mother's life or health. **"There's not a single fetal or maternal condition that requires third trimester abortion. Not one. Delivery, yes. Abortion, no,"** Dr. Omar Hamada, an obstetrician-gynecologist and theologian, said recently.⁹ Dr. James Studnicki, Vice President and Director of Data Analytics at the Charlotte Lozier Institute, observes:

⁹ Washington Post, "Tough questions – and answers – on 'late-term' abortions, the law and the women who get them," Feb. 06, 2019, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2019/02/06/tough-questions-answers-late-term-abortion-law-women-who-get-them/>.

[W]hile the occasional politician or news reporter will still indicate that late-term abortions are most often performed in the case of "severe fetal anomalies" or to "save the woman's life," the trajectory of the peer-reviewed research literature has been obvious for decades: most late-term abortions are elective, done on healthy women with healthy fetuses, and for the same reasons given by women experiencing first trimester abortions.¹⁰

Studnicki notes that reports from the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute over the last two decades have clearly identified the reasons why women seek abortion: financial concerns, lack of partner support, and not feeling ready to parent, often due to school or work¹¹—all areas where the local community can come alongside women to offer compassion, hope, encouragement, concrete support, and life-affirming options.

And these reasons haven't changed over the years. Another more recent Guttmacher study focusing on late-term abortions concluded that women seeking abortions after 20 weeks of gestation were *not* doing so for reasons of fetal anomaly or life endangerment as we are often led to believe.¹² Likewise, a study from the University of California at San Francisco—a hotbed of pro-abortion advocacy—found that women who got later abortions were similar in "race, ethnicity, number of live births or abortions, mental or physical health history or substance use" to women who had first-trimester abortions.¹³

No matter how many big lies the abortion industry tells to justify New York-style abortion extremism, it's facts like these that are carrying the debate in North Carolina and around the country. That's why I'm so optimistic about America's pro-life future, and why I'm so proud to stand with our friends and allies in the Old North State to fight to reduce abortion and protect women and children. Our movement is growing and becoming more diverse every day as more and more young people and women, in particular, join with us to stand for life. The hard work we are doing to support women and families is paying off, and we are on the verge of unprecedented victories for mothers and babies. Together, working towards our common good, we will see an end to *Roe* and a return to a nation in which *everyone* is welcomed in life and protected in law! 🇺🇸

Catherine Glenn Foster, M.A., J.D., serves as President & CEO of Americans United for Life



¹⁰ Studnicki, James, "Late-Term Abortion and Medical Necessity: A Failure of Science," *Health Serv. Res. Manag. Epidemiol.* 2019 Jan-Dec; 6: 2333392819841781, published online 2019 Apr 9, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6457018/>.

¹¹ Studnicki, *ibid.*, citing Finer LB, Frohworth LF, Dauphinee LA, Singh S, Moore AM, *Reasons U.S. women have abortions: quantitative and qualitative perspectives*, in *Perspect. Sex. Reprod. Health.* 2005;37(3):110–118. doi:10.1363/3711005.

¹² Studnicki, *ibid.*, citing Foster DG, Kimport K, *Who seeks abortions at or after 20 weeks?*, in *Perspect. Sex. Reprod. Health.* 2013;45(4):210–218. doi:10.1363/4521013.

¹³ See <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1363/4521013>.



Why GOOD Christian Girls Choose Abortion

By Wendy Bonano

“Deidra” sobbed uncontrollably as she explained why she had to have an abortion. Deidra is a 19-year-old freshman at North Carolina State University, the first in her family to go to college, and has her sights set on being a Physician Assistant. She loves the Lord, is active in her church and her parents have raised her well, teaching her God’s standards of purity and abstinence until marriage. Despite all that, Deidra and her boyfriend went “too far” and now, here she is at Gateway Women’s Care, scared to death and too afraid to tell her parents she’s pregnant. As this intelligent, capable young woman sits in front of me, the words tumbled out...

I’m so scared to tell my parents I’m pregnant. I have to have an abortion because my parents can never know I’ve been having sex; they would be horrified and I’d rather go through an abortion than have to face them and disappoint them.

Unfortunately, Deidra’s response is extremely common. It is heartbreaking to witness the genuine fear and indecision that many Christian girls experience when faced with an unplanned pregnancy and how it drives girls to NOT seek help from those who love them the most—their parents. These fears are why “good” Christian girls abort and why their parents will most likely never know.

I imagine you are thinking, “This would never be my daughter.” I beg you to think again. More often than not, “good” Christian girls in relationships are determined to abstain from intercourse and therefore are not actively using contraception. Therefore, it takes just one poor decision by either your son or daughter to create an unplanned pregnancy, regardless of all you’ve taught them. Your child’s absence from home, if they’re living away at college, makes an abortion decision easier to hide from you.

How then should we talk to our children about sex, purity, unplanned pregnancies and abortion?

More than ten years of experience at Gateway Women’s Care has shown me that quite often there’s a piece missing from the “talks” parents have with their daughters and sons. Without knowing it, we are leaving no doors open for our children to come back to us should they stray. We are making good, strong cases for purity until marriage and yet neglecting to communicate the message of grace: that we are there for them no matter what, and should they make a mistake—in this case, get pregnant—it is safe for them to come to us for help and support.

Simply put: Parents, talk to your children.

Parents, talk to your children about God’s design for sex and marriage, about the benefits of purity and how that plays out practically in our sex-saturated culture. Don’t avoid this conversation since the world will most definitely jump in and fill whatever vacuum you leave. Emphasize to them that we all fall short of the perfect standards of God and that nothing, not even an unplanned pregnancy, will separate them from your love and support.

The most difficult conversation of your life.

Young people, if you find you are pregnant—and I hope and pray that you will never need this advice—understand that talking to your parents will most likely be one of the most difficult conversations of your life. **But DO IT!** Most parents would be horrified at first to hear that their child aborted and did not come to them for help.

- **Plan and rehearse how you will tell your parents. Make it simple and direct.**
- **Avoid getting angry. Your parents’ emotional response is normal and to be expected.**
- **Allow your parents to “vent.” Validate their feelings with responses like, “I know how disappointed you are in me right now.”**
- **Have a plan for going forward. Thinking through your next steps will speak volumes to your parents.**

God has a purpose for every life. An unplanned pregnancy may not seem like a blessing but the Lord can turn your sorrow into joy. God can open your eyes, both parents and children, to see this “unplanned” child as a blessing from Him. 🙏

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” –Jeremiah 29:11

Wendy Bonano is Executive Director of Gateway Women’s Care, pregnancy centers in Raleigh and Durham

