



Montana † Catholic † Conference



November 19, 2009

Statement by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Montana

The Roman Catholic Bishops will not support CI-102, the personhood amendment.

The Roman Catholic Bishops of Montana are united with all who embrace the common goal of saving unborn babies, supporting mothers and ultimately putting an end to the tragedy of abortion.

In this battle to protect innocent life, there are many challenges and many different strategies. One strategy we have evaluated is the personhood amendment. We consulted with our brother Bishops in Colorado, Michigan, Georgia, and Florida and elsewhere who have faced, or are currently facing, similar initiatives in their home states. In addition, we met with state and national pro-life organizations, as well as leaders from other faiths who have, like us, agonized over these initiatives.

We have been advised by leading pro-life attorneys that the strategy to pass a state constitutional amendment declaring personhood is problematic, in part, because of its heavy reliance on unpredictable courts and dependence on future legislative actions to define and implement the law. They have also expressed concerns that state personhood amendments might trigger an appellate process that could strengthen *Roe v. Wade*.

The key to advancing the culture of life in Montana is addressing the privacy provision in our state constitution which provides a right to abortion. Therefore, we are working with constitutional experts to develop an amendment which would exclude abortion from the privacy provision in the state constitution.

Passing such a constitutional amendment would open the way to addressing real change in the state. We could then pass laws to enact restrictions such as requiring short waiting periods before an abortion can be performed and requiring parental notification in cases when the person seeking an abortion is under age. These restrictions have been noted in a recent study as being effective in reducing abortion. Passage of such laws would save numerous lives on the way to changing hearts and minds as we work to achieve our ultimate goal of overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

Having placed both competing and compelling opinions in the balance, we, the Catholic Bishops of Montana will not support CI-102.

No one step along the way is the final destination. Some steps are more significant in their immediate impact than others. But every step we take in passing effective pro-life legislation moves us toward our common goal of complete protection of human life from conception to natural death. We will combine these efforts to support unborn life with our ongoing efforts to abolish the death penalty and to oppose current court actions that would allow physician assisted suicide.

Most Reverend George Leo Thomas

Most Reverend Michael W. Warfel

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