



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 9, 2011

Mississippi Voters Reject Pro-Life Personhood Amendment

Mississippi voters have rejected a proposed amendment to their state constitution that would have defined life as beginning at conception. While one major survey of voters taken just days before the vote found Initiative Measure 26 leading by a razor-thin 45-44 percent, LifeNews.com, a pro-life news site, reported late on November 8th that with 1,559 of the state's 1,876 precincts counted, the amendment had failed by a lopsided 58 to 42 percentage.

The personhood amendment, which is being heavily promoted in several states by a national group called [Personhood USA](#), would define unborn children as persons under the law beginning at conception, a qualification that the amendment's champions argue would effectively ban all abortions. But LifeNews pointed out that top pro-life attorneys and organizations predicted that the amendment would be shot down in court, and even if the amendment survived a legal challenge, it would most likely fail to put a stop to abortions. LifeNews noted that opposition from such groups as National Right to Life was based on the argument that the amendment "would not ban abortions and would perhaps give a pro-abortion dominated Supreme Court or lower courts a chance to reaffirm the *Roe v. Wade* decision that allowed virtually unlimited abortions in 1973."

Among the broadly conservative politicians who struggled with the proposed amendment was Republican Governor Haley Barbour, who maintained a week before the ballot that he was undecided on his support. "Some very strongly pro-life people have raised questions about the ambiguity and about the actual consequences," he said, "whether there are unforeseen, unintended consequences. And I'll have to say that I have heard those concerns and they give me some pause." Nevertheless, reported [LifeSiteNews](#), Barbour said that he ended up voting in favor of the amendment. "I think all in all, I know I believe life begins at conception. So I think the right thing to do was to vote for it," he said. Opponents of the measure, led by abortion activists, went on the attack early in the campaign for the amendment, warning that passage would result in the ban of birth control measures like the morning-





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after pill and the IUD. They also raised the specter that the wording of the initiative, saying that life begins “from the moment of fertilization,” would have discouraged physicians from performing in vitro fertilization out of fear that they might face prosecution if an embryo did not survive.

Keith Mason, one of the founders of Personhood USA, told the [Associated Press](#) that the initiative failed “not because the people are not pro-life. It’s because Planned Parenthood put a lot of misconceptions and lies in front of folks and created a lot of confusion.”

In a statement afterward [Planned Parenthood](#) said: “Mississippi voters rejected the so-called ‘personhood’ amendment because they understood it is government gone too far, and would have allowed government to have control over personal decisions that should be left up to a woman, her family, her doctor and her faith, including keeping a woman with a life-threatening pregnancy from getting the care she needs, and criminalizing everything from abortion to common forms of birth control such as the pill and the IUD.”

The Rev. Jimmy Porter, director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention’s [Christian Action Commission](#), which had lobbied for the amendment, issued a statement, saying: “We mourn with heaven tonight over the loss of Initiative 26, which would have provided the hope of life for thousands of God’s unborn babies in Mississippi. Instead the unborn in Mississippi will continue to be led down on a path of destruction to horrible deaths both inside their mothers and in laboratories.”

Similar personhood measures were handily defeated twice in Colorado, by a 73-27 margin in 2008, and by a similar 70-30 percent spread in 2010.

Nonetheless, Mason said that his Colorado-based group will retool for another try in Mississippi, and continues to work with pro-life groups in Florida, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Nevada, and California to get similar initiatives on ballots in those states in 2012.

“Personhood USA understands that changing a culture — and changing a country — will not happen with one election, and so it is not unexpected,” Mason wrote in a [commentary](#) following the Mississippi defeat. “We thank the over one quarter of a million Mississippians who voted for Amendment 26. We vow to continue on this path towards affirming the basic dignity and human rights of all people because we are assured that it is the right thing to do, and we are prepared for a long journey.”

Mason called abortion “the greatest injustice of our day. Children are brutally dismembered and killed in their mother’s womb at the rate of over 3,000 per day. Abortion clinics are strategically located across the country.” He added that in key states “we are taking critical steps towards defending the right to life of all human beings, every person, and ending the dangerous and deadly practice of abortion. The time has come for America to stop treating the unborn as property to be disposed of as we see fit. We are thankful that lives were saved and hearts were changed through the ‘Yes on 26’ campaign, and we are prepared to do it again in multiple states across the nation.”



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