



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 10, 2013

North Dakota Moves Toward Passage of Pro-Life Personhood Amendment

The North Dakota state Senate approved an amendment last Thursday that would protect unborn babies from the moment of conception. The proposed “personhood” amendment ([SCR 4009](#)) declares that “the inalienable right to life of every human being at any stage of development must be recognized and protected.” The Senate also passed another bill (SB 2303) meant to ensure that “the protection that our criminal laws afford to victims of crimes extends to all human beings born and unborn.”



The amendment’s sponsor, Republican State Senator Margaret Sitte, said she intended the measure to serve as “a direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade*, since [Supreme Court Justice Antonin] Scalia said that the Supreme Court is waiting for states to raise a case. By passage of this amendment, the people of North Dakota are asking government to recognize what science already defined.”

In 2009 and 2011 the personhood proposal was passed by the state House of Representatives but died each time in the Senate. This time, predicted Jennifer Mason of [Personhood USA](#), a group that lobbies for personhood bills around the nation, the bill has a good chance of making it all the way to the the 2014 state ballot, where she believes voters would overwhelmingly approve it. “We just need the North Dakota House of Representatives to stay strong and vote as they did before,” she said, “and we’ll see this pass for the first time in the United States.”

Similar personhood amendments have fallen short on ballots in other states over the past couple of years. If North Dakota succeeds in implementing the amendment, it could provide motivation for renewed attempts in other states. “North Dakota is leading the way for equal rights and protections for all human beings,” said Mason. “After the struggles to pass life-affirming amendments in the Senate in the past four years, we are very pleased that the North Dakota Senate has chosen to protect all living human beings. This is a historic day in North Dakota.”

She said that current abortion laws “are archaic, based on 40-year-old science and technology. Our understanding of pregnancy and human development since *Roe v Wade* has changed dramatically. There is no question now that the unborn child is a human being and a person, who has a right to legal recognition and protection.”

Pro-abortion opponents of the personhood amendment say that among other faults, it does not include any exceptions that would allow for abortion in cases of rape, incest, or to supposedly protect the life of the mother. “So long as this proposed amendment does not make some consideration for the life already in existence, of the woman who is carrying the child, then we have no business putting this question before the people of North Dakota,” said one critic, Democratic State Senator Connie Triplett.

Rania Batrice, director of communications for the North Dakota Democratic Party, likened the personhood effort to a “bad episode of *The Twilight Zone*. These bills just open the door for every other state in the country to interject themselves into everybody’s bedroom.”

Similarly Sarah Stoesz, head of Planned Parenthood’s Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota



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franchises, insisted that decisions on abortion should not include considerations of the life of the pre-born baby, but should be left entirely to a pregnant woman, her doctor, and her family. “North Dakotans expect real solutions to the real problems facing our state,” stressed Stoesz, “not government intrusion into private medical decisions.”

Stoesz charged that conservative, pro-life lawmakers in the state “are wasting taxpayer time advancing what would no doubt become another divisive constitutional amendment with dangerous unintended consequences for North Dakota families.” She pledged that abortion giant Planned Parenthood would “continue to fight these legislative attacks on women’s health,” partnering with a “broad coalition” of ultra-liberal groups and individuals who insist on the unfettered license of women to end the lives of their pre-born children.

[LifeNews.com](#) noted that some pro-life leaders have also criticized the personhood amendment “because they say it will head to the Supreme Court, which will strike it down and add to the pro-Roe v. Wade case law upholding unlimited abortions. Knowing that, they say a better strategy is supporting pro-life Senate candidates and replacing pro-abortion President Barack Obama — paving the way for new Supreme Court justices who could overturn *Roe* or uphold such an amendment.”

Nonetheless, Senator Sitte said that assuming the personhood amendment is approved by the legislature, she fully expects state voters to pass the amendment in 2014. “We know North Dakotans are pro-life,” she said. “This just puts a statement of fact into the Constitution.”

In addition to the two personhood measures, the state Senate also passed a bill aimed at closing down North Dakota’s only abortion provider, the Red River Women’s Clinic in Fargo. The bill would require that abortion doctors have admitting privileges at a local hospital. “A similar law in Mississippi is currently threatening to close the only clinic in that state because the hospitals near the Jackson clinic are all refusing the applications of doctors who perform abortions,” reported LifeNews.com.

Photo: North Dakota state capitol building



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