



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 20, 2013

## Rhode Island Governor Vetoes Pro-Life, Pro-Adoption License Plate Measure

Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee (shown) has vetoed a bill that would have authorized the state to offer a “Choose Life” license plate to raise funds for a faith-based crisis pregnancy center in the state. The governor cited the First Amendment’s supposed separation of church and state mandate that he insisted prohibited the state government from involving itself in such a campaign. The measure, which was approved by the Democrat-controlled state legislature earlier this month, would have allowed half of the \$40 cost of the vehicle plates to go to Providence-based [CareNet](#), a Christian crisis pregnancy center. Supporters said the campaign would have helped to reduce abortions in the state.



Pro-abortion activists had asked Chafee to veto the bill for the plates, which 29 other states currently offer. While the state offers other messages on its license plates, Chafee nonetheless advised lawmakers in his veto that the sole function of a license plate is “to register and identify a motor vehicle.” He said it was his conviction that “state participation in the transmission of funds to this organization would violate the separation of church and state, one of the fundamental principles upon which our state was founded.” He claimed that the “framers of the United States and Rhode Island Constitutions constructed strong walls of separation between church and state. This bill compels the state to collect and distribute funds to an organization that advocates a particular religious and political viewpoint.”

Barth Bracy of Rhode Island [Right to Life](#) challenged Chafee’s stated reason for the veto. “The Choose Life License Plate was approved by an overwhelmingly Democratic Rhode Island General Assembly to support the positive choices of infant adoption and the Rhode Island Safe Haven program,” Barth said in a statement. “The Choose Life Plate is already available in Massachusetts and Connecticut.” He said that Chafee’s veto “reveals an extremism on abortion that is consistent with his position on the national board of NARAL, but is grossly out of step with other New England Democrats.” For a parting shot Bracy said that “a man who speaks of tolerance while stifling the free speech of those who disagree with him can only be regarded as a hypocrite.”

Russ Amerling of [Choose Life America](#), the organization behind the “Choose Life” license plate campaign nationwide, noted that his group worked closely with Rhode Island Right to Life and lawmakers to get the plates approved as part of its goal of seeing a “Choose Life” license plate in all 50 states. “Twenty-nine states now offer the plate and groups are working in 17 more,” he said, and “they have raised over \$18 million for the cause of life and adoption in those states.”

Elizabeth Rex of the [Children First Foundation](#), which advocates for the adoption of babies from crisis pregnancies, noted the aggressive manner in which pro-abortion groups had campaigned against the



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pro-life plates. “To the surprise and shock of many ‘pro-choice’ legislators,” she said, “several aggressive abortion rights organizations, including Planned Parenthood, that have never had any problem injecting their emotional and contentious abortion rights agenda upon the legislators and the taxpayers of Rhode Island, suddenly have a huge problem with ‘pro-choice’ legislators who dare to show their support for two positive alternative choices — adoption and safe havens — as proposed in the Choose Life plate bill.”

Of Chaffee’s veto, Rex wondered: “Ultimately, is Governor Chafee really ‘pro-choice’ or is he just ‘pro-abortion?’”

*Photo of Gov. Lincoln Chafee: AP Images*



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