



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

Super Bowl Champ No-show at White House Over Abortion Stance

A member of the Super Bowl champion Baltimore Ravens refused to accompany the team to the customary White House meeting after the stunning victory over the New England Patriots because of President Obama's over-the-top support of abortion giant Planned Parenthood. Retired Ravens center Matt Birk (shown), a conservative Catholic who [last year filmed a video spot in favor of traditional marriage in his native Minnesota](#), backed out of the June 5 team trip to the White House, telling local Minneapolis sports radio station [KFAN](#): "I wasn't there.... I have great respect for the office of the Presidency, but about five or six weeks ago, our president made a comment in a speech and he said, 'God bless Planned Parenthood.'"



The six-foot-four inch, 310-pound Birk, a 15-year NFL veteran with six Pro-Bowls under his belt, was referring to [Obama's comments](#), made in late April during a speech at a Planned Parenthood fundraising gala, in which he refused to mention the word "abortion" while offering a glowing endorsement of the organization which is responsible for a good share of the 50 million abortions that have been performed in the United States since 1973.

"Somewhere there's a woman who just received a new lease on life because of a screening that you provided that helped catch her cancer in time," Obama told his Planned Parenthood audience. "Somewhere there's a woman who's breathing easier today because of the support and counseling she got at her local Planned Parenthood health clinic." And — without speaking the abhorrent "A" word — the president noted that "somewhere there's a young woman starting a career who, because of you, is able to decide for herself when she wants to start a family." By which he meant that Planned Parenthood has been only too willing to kill the pre-born babies of countless women who decided that, for whatever reason, a baby would be an unnecessary inconvenience.

Obama concluded his politically motivated speech with the words, "Thank you, Planned Parenthood. God bless you. God bless America" — words that another Minnesotan, prominent evangelical pastor and author John Piper, termed "blasphemous."

Birk, a graduate of Harvard University (economics) who spent the bulk of his career playing for the Minnesota Vikings, explained his concern over the president's support of the nation's number-one performer of abortion procedures: "Planned Parenthood performs about 330,000 abortions a year. I am Catholic, I am active in the pro-life movement, and I just felt like I couldn't deal with that. I couldn't endorse that in any way." Birk added that he was "very confused" by the implications of the president's statement. "For God to bless a place where they're ending 330,000 lives a year," he explained. "I just



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chose not to attend.”

Birk’s absence at the White House event was conspicuous, since he served an integral leadership role in the underdog Ravens’ run to the world championship. The White House had no response for Birk’s comments.

However, KFAN sports commentator Aj Mansour, who made no value judgment on either Birk or Planned Parenthood, was genuinely impressed with Birk’s stand. “While Birk may look back on Wednesday’s visit and think about what could have been, for him,” Mansour reflected, “it will remain a proud moment where he stood firm, standing up for something that he believes in.”

Dozens of KFAN listeners offered their feedback on Birk, who has been a very popular sports figure in the Twin Cities for years. “Just lost some respect for Matty B,” one reader commented on the KFAN website. “His opinion on a political issue is not the issue to me. This is a celebration of a championship. Be part of the team. The White House visit [is] an honor. He, and others in the past, are using this for a selfish press opp.”

Another writer harked back to the president’s own words, saying, “God bless Matt for standing up and making a statement despite its unpopularity with secular society.”

This is not the first time Birk has spoken up for life. In a 2012 interview with the [Catholic Review](#), he recalled holding his first newborn child and realizing that life is a gift from God. “It was unbelievable the love that I felt for her,” he recalled, “and any parent knows exactly what I’m talking about. At that point, you know it’s not a choice. Life is a gift that’s given to us. We are supposed to accept it. It’s not our choice whether we decide a baby lives or not.”

Similarly, Birk encouraged a 2012 March for Life rally in Annapolis, Maryland: “It seems like our society and media want to push pro-lifers to the side and hope that we would shut our mouths and go away quietly. Let’s not do that.” In the same speech Birk encouraged the pro-life audience to pray for women who seek abortion, as well as for those who work in abortion clinics. “We all need saving,” he said, “and there’s one thing that can save us all, and that’s prayer.”

In 2012, as Minnesota prepared to vote on a proposed state constitutional amendment that would have defined marriage as only between a man and a woman, [Birk taped a short TV spot](#), produced by the Minnesota Catholic Conference, encouraging voters to support traditional marriage. Appealing to his fellow Catholic Christians, Birk noted that “our culture today of moral relativism attacks marriage and a lot of our Catholic values, but marriage is a foundation of our society and it’s definitely something worth fighting for.” He added that “a lot of people say ... let everybody do what they want, but this is too important of an issue to do that on. We need to stand up and fight for it, and preserve it, for our children’s sake and for the sake of our entire society.”

Noting that marriage has existed far longer than the state and government, Birk challenged that “I don’t think it’s their place to redefine it. I think as human beings most of us search for the truth ... and as Catholics we try to find what is God’s will. I believe this is God’s will, to stand up and fight for one of the gifts he blessed us with.”

The efforts of Birk and hundreds of thousands of other pro-family Minnesotans were not sufficient, as state voters narrowly rejected the marriage protection amendment, positioning the Minnesota legislature to pass a bill, signed into law by Gov. Mark Dayton in May, legalizing homosexual partnerships as marriage.



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Photo of Matt Birk: AP Images



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