



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 30, 2011

GOP Candidates Pledge to Pursue Pro-Life “Personhood” Agenda

In the final run-up to the January 3rd Iowa Caucuses, a handful of Republican presidential candidates highlighted their pro-life bona fides in a nationally simulcast “teletown hall” forum sponsored by Personhood USA and several pro-life organizations.

Significantly, all four of the participants in the National Presidential Pro-life Forum [Michele Bachmann](#), [Rick Santorum](#), [Newt Gingrich](#), and [Rick Perry](#) have signed on to the [Personhood Republican Presidential Candidate Pledge](#), which supposedly binds them as President to, among other promises, work to advance state and federal laws and amendments that recognize the unalienable right to life of all human beings, and to appoint federal judges and other officials who will work to uphold such federal measures.



Opening up the comments, Rick Perry pledged to enforce the right to life with a human life amendment ... without waiting for the courts to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. He emphasized that the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion would be overturned with a true pro-life president possibly appointing upwards of two or three new Supreme Court justices, so that would be my goal.

Noting that she was the first GOP candidate to sign the personhood pledge, Michele Bachmann highlighted her promise to repeal Obamas notorious healthcare legislation while pursuing a federal personhood amendment designed to protect the unborn from conception. What we need to do to upend *Roe vs. Wade* and end the horrible holocaust of life in the United States is pass the personhood amendment, she declared, adding that we dont have to wait just for the Supreme Court, we can be involved in this ourselves. The one thing we cant get wrong in this election is the life issue. She emphasized that of all of the candidates in this race, I am the only one who will repeal Obamacare.

Asked about his ideas on federal personhood legislation, Rick Santorum said that if he were President, such a measure would be a very simple one that would recognize life from conception to natural death as what it is, a human life. He emphasized that such a bill should be simple, and brief, and to the point. Asked what would happen if the Supreme Court moved to strike down such the measure, he declared: You do what you always do in every case when the Court strikes it down, you fight.

Newt Gingrich said that among his first actions as a pro-life President would be to reinstate Ronald Reagans Mexico City Policy, which prohibited the U.S. government from giving foreign aid to family planning groups which provided abortions. President Obama overturned the policy when he took office.



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Gingrich also promised to defund Planned Parenthood and transfer the money from Planned Parenthood to adoption services, as well as to overhaul the U.S. Foreign service to get rid of the people who are aggressively pro-abortion.

As for personhood legislation, Gingrich said he would make sure that the bill is written so that it is not appealable to the Supreme Court. I think you could write an exclusionary clause into the bill, he explained. [TheHill.com](#) noted that those comments track with a [White Paper](#) on judicial activism that Gingrich published in October. The paper calls for setting limitations on federal court jurisdiction, among other proposals.

Conspicuously missing from the forum were Republican candidates Mitt Romney and John Huntsman, neither of whom signed the personhood pledge. While Romney has said he believes that life begins at conception, he supposedly also believes that pro-life legislation and constitutional amendments are a state rather than federal concern. For his part Huntsman has said that legislation defining personhood goes too far.

Also conspicuous by his absence from the forum was Ron Paul, who has raised the ire of mainstream pro-life groups for his refusal to follow their scripted pro-life presidential agenda. For example, while Paul joined the other four candidates in [signing the Personhood USA presidential pledge](#), he did so only with a [lengthy addendum](#) which fully lays out his pro-life position while specifying what the federal government constitutionally can and cannot do to protect the unborn.

Paul begins his addendum with a reminder that as a pro-life OB/GYN who has delivered over 4,000 babies, I have always opposed abortion. Let me be very clear: life begins at conception. It is the duty of the government to protect life, as set forth in our founding documents.

But he adds that as a strict constitutionalist he is compelled to stand by Americas chief governing document, even when doing so is hard and forces me to stand alone. He notes that the fight to protect the unborn is just such an instance. Both this pledge and the pro-life issue itself require some careful thought from my fellow pro-lifers so we can avoid the trap of throwing out the Constitution in our effort to save lives, he explains. Just as we cannot have liberty without life, I believe the opposite is also true: we must keep the Constitution and liberty in mind when fighting for the rights of the unborn. Otherwise, we undermine the entire system our Founders put their lives on the line to create in order to protect life and liberty.

Calling the passage of a Human Life Amendment to the U.S. Constitution a laudable goal, Paul goes on to qualify what he believes is the constitutional role of the federal government in protecting life. I believe *Roe v. Wade* should be repealed, he says. I believe federal law should declare that life begins at conception. But, he emphasizes, I believe states should regulate the enforcement of this law, as they do other laws against violence.

Addressing the equal protection clause that pro-life advocates site for federal muscle in protecting the unborn, Paul notes that the Fourteenth Amendment was never intended to cancel out the Tenth Amendment. This means that I cant agree that the Fourteenth Amendment has a role to play here, or otherwise we would end up with a Federal Department of Abortion. Does anyone believe that will help life?

Paul exhorts that we should allow our republican system of government to function as our Founders designed it to: protect rights at the federal level, enforce laws against violence at the state level.

As for judges who have helped to solidify a federal pro-abortion mandate, Paul promises to work for



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legislation that would remove abortion from the jurisdiction of the federal courts. This approach, done by simple majority vote and stroke of my Presidential Pen, would effectively overturn *Roe v. Wade* and allow states to pass strong pro-life legislation immediately, he explains. Millions of lives would be saved by this approach while we fight to make every state a right to life state.

In addition, Paul promises to end federal abortion funding, and to defund Planned Parenthood along with any state department or UN agency that encourages abortion in their family planning activities. In short, he promises to veto family planning bills until no taxpayer dollars go to abortion.

Finally, Paul promises to do battle against cultural depravity by ending all federal programs that undermine the family and our traditional American values of respect for life and personal responsibility. I will lead by example, as I have done every day in my medical practice and in Congress.

Concludes Paul: We can remain true to our principle of following the Constitution while also fighting for our moral values. In fact, we must.



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