



Is Romney “Disengaged” From Life Issues?

“Put simply, women in America cannot trust Mitt Romney,” Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-choice America told the cheering delegates at the Democratic National Convention Tuesday night. But if what Romney’s sister said last week about her brother’s stand on abortion is accurate, pro-life Republicans might not want to trust him much, either.



“He’s not going to be touching any of that. It’s not his focus,” Jane Romney, the candidate’s eldest sister, said in a response to a question about abortion at a “Women for Mitt” event in Tampa. The Obama campaign has been running ads warning women that their “right to choose” is threatened by the Romney-Ryan ticket, but Jane Romney dismissed that as a political scare tactic, the *National Journal* [reported](#).

“That’s what women are afraid of, but that’s conjured,” she said. “Personally, I don’t think abortion should be used as a football in the political arena.” Though believing “life is sacred,” she assigns a greater value to a woman’s choice.

“Every woman needs to be left to make her own choice,” she said, stating confidently that a ban on abortion is “never going to happen” during a Romney administration. “Women would take to the streets,” she said. “Women fought for our choice; we’re not going to go back.”

Jane Romney, who said she is an actress in Los Angeles, has not been seen on the campaign trail and does not act as a surrogate for the candidate, the *National Journal* noted. How familiar she is with her brother’s thinking on the subject of abortion and to what extent she may be reading her own convictions into it is open to question. But assurances to “pro-choice” women, offered by a close relative to the candidate, are anything but reassuring to pro-life activists.

The platform adopted by the Republicans last week included unequivocal pro-life language that has been in the party platform since 1984:

The unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We therefore reaffirm our support for a human life amendment to the Constitution, and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to unborn children.

As with its platforms of previous years, the party made no mention of exceptions, though most “pro-life” candidates, including Romney, say they are in favor of permitting abortion in cases where a pregnancy has resulted from rape or incest, or when it endangers the life of the mother. The platform adopted by the Democrats at their convention this week proclaims a woman’s “right to choose a safe and legal abortion” for whatever reason and “regardless of ability to pay” — meaning not only that a woman has a



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“right” to abortion, but the state has a duty to compel others to pay for it, including those who have strong moral objections to it. As Jane Romney sees it, her brother is somewhere in between.

“Mitt is much more in the middle,” she said.

In his acceptance speech at the GOP convention, Romney pledged: “As President, I will protect the sanctity of life. I will honor the institution of marriage. And I will guarantee America’s first liberty: the freedom of religion.” But earlier in the week, in an interview on the [CBS Evening News](#), Romney appeared to be expanding his list of exceptions to legal protection for the unborn.

“My position has been clear throughout this campaign,” he said. “I’m in favor of abortion being legal in the case of rape and incest, and the health and life of the mother.” The additions of a “health” exception set off alarm bells in some pro-life circles, since claims of adverse effects of a pregnancy on a woman’s physical, mental or emotional health may be interpreted broadly enough to make it the exception that swallows the rule. Marjorie Dammenfelter, president of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List, told American Family Radio host Bryan Fischer that she has been assured by the Romney campaign that the candidate [“misspoke”](#) and had not meant to include a health exception.

“If that were his position, he would never have received our endorsement, that’s for sure,” Dammenfelter said. “I have had clarification from his spokesperson, restating what his position really is, which is rape, incest, life of the mother. That is his position. Those are his exceptions.”

Throughout his two campaigns for president, Romney has run into skepticism or, in some cases, outright disbelief about his positions on some of the issues that galvanize the party’s “social conservatives.” As a candidate for both U.S. Senate and governor of Massachusetts, Romney defended the “right to choose” abortion. Midway through his term (2003-2007) as governor, a bill concerning embryonic stem cell research led him, he has said, to rethink issues about the sanctity of life and when life begins. But doubters noted that his apparent conversion on the subject occurred around the time he began making plans to pursue his party’s presidential nomination, knowing that pro-life support would be critical.

His opposition to same-sex marriage has also been called into question. Skeptics have pointed to the letter he sent to Massachusetts Log Cabin Republicans as a Senate candidate in 1994, claiming he would be a more effective champion of gay and lesbian rights than his opponent, Senator Edward M. Kennedy. And Gov. Romney in 2004 ordered town clerks in Massachusetts to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples in accordance with a state Supreme Court ruling, even though the Legislature had refused to comply with the court’s directive to revise the state’s marriage laws. That not only fueled suspicions concerning Romney’s commitment to the defense of traditional marriage, but raised questions as well about his willingness to bow to the kind of “judicial activism” that he has frequently condemned on the campaign trail.

And in that CBS interview last week, Romney seemed eager to distance himself from the abortion issue, which he said has been, will be and is being “settled” by “the courts.”

“Recognize this is the decision that will be made by the Supreme Court,” Romney said. “The Democrats try and make this a political issue every four years, but this is a matter in the courts. It’s been settled for some time in the courts.”

Should Romney be elected, he would soon be nominating judges to fill vacancies “in the courts.” Given the ages and state of health of some of its members, he would likely be nominating to the Supreme Court one or more new members who could tip the balance in favor of overturning the 1973 *Roe v.*



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Wade decision, declaring abortion a constitutional right. ([The decision read](#), in part: “We, therefore, conclude that the right of personal privacy includes the abortion decision....”) Romney has said he is in favor of reversing *Roe*. But in the CBS interview, he seemed disinterested and appeared to dismiss the possibility of legal protection for the unborn as a distraction that is, as his sister put it, “conjured” up by the Democrats every four years. It was a side of the candidate Ben Johnson noted in [lifesitenews.com](#) back in March, when he described Romney as “disengaged from our issues, dismissive of our concerns and disinclined to give us the time of day.”

Johnson took note of Romney’s answer to a reporter’s question about the Blunt amendment that was then before the Senate. The legislation would have overturned the Department of Health and Human Services mandate requiring employers, including those in religious institutions, to provide coverage for contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs in health insurance for their employees. A confused Romney said he was against the bill, then reversed himself a few hours later, saying he supported it.

Johnson allowed for the fact that the question, as it was put to Romney, was itself meandering and confused. What was troubling, he said, was Romney was obviously unfamiliar with the issue. “For advocates of religious liberty,” Johnson wrote, “there has been no issue as pressing as overturning the HHS mandate... The fact that he is not conversant with these measures is symptomatic of his candidacy’s wide, broad, deep and well-cultivated estrangement from the pro-life movement.

“In a nutshell Romney campaigns as though we did not exist.”

Should he win what is shaping up to be a very close election, Romney might also be inclined to govern as though the right to life movement did not exist and did not help him defeat Barack Obama.



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