



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 15, 2018

## Pro-life Democrats Feel Unwelcome in Missouri

For all its talk about diversity, the Democratic Party has once more made it clear that it excludes those who believe that unborn babies are deserving of legal protection.

On Saturday, the central committee of the Missouri Democratic Party voted to delete from the party's platform language that welcomed pro-lifers into the party.



That language, added in June in a 31-25 vote, read:

We respect the conscience of each Missourian and recognize that members of our party have deeply held and sometimes differing positions on issues of personal conscience, such as abortion. We recognize the diversity of views as a source of strength, and welcome into our ranks all Missourians who may hold differing positions on this issue.

The amendment was passed somewhat hastily. According to St. Louis' [Riverfront Times](#), "It was emailed to members one day before a scheduled vote on a new platform — and the vote ended up taking place on a day that many party activists had already committed to being at immigration protests."

On top of that, the state had recently defunded Planned Parenthood, and Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy had just announced his retirement, raising the specter of a *Roe v. Wade* reversal. No wonder the vote sent pro-abortion forces into a tizzy, as a [Kansas City Star editorial](#) noted:

Alison Dreith, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri, called the inclusive language "sickening" and "a slap in the face to the base voters of the party." Rachel Sweet, of Planned Parenthood Great Plains Votes, said that by "rolling out the welcome mat for candidates who do not support abortion rights," the Missouri Democratic Party was "signaling to its female supporters that their rights are expendable."

Saturday's vote replaced the inclusive amendment with a strong affirmation of "a woman's right to choose" and absolute opposition to "any efforts to limit access to reproductive health care."

St. Louis Alderwoman Annie Rice told the [Star](#) that a preamble had been added to the platform "to make it clear that while the platform reflects the party's values, candidates must articulate their own policy positions when engaging with voters."

Conveniently, the vote to repeal the amendment was a voice vote, allowing committee members to escape scrutiny for their choices and state party chairman Stephen Webber to claim the decision "unif[ied] all Democrats." However, former State Representative Joan Barry, who introduced the amendment, said she and "several others on the committee" expressed dissent at the meeting and she abstained from the vote, reported the *Star*.

"Diversity has been a matter of strength in this party," Barry told the paper. "I just felt that we needed to be sure pro-life Democrats are recognized as members of the party. Some people in the electorate don't believe that you can be pro-life and be a Democrat. But that's not true."



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Just as they had assailed the amendment's passage, so pro-abortion groups hailed its repeal. "The Democratic Party's overwhelming vote to re-prioritize reproductive freedom has put the party back on track just in time to pick up wins in November," said Dreith. "This vote just goes to show that when women organize, women win."

Democrats for Life, a Virginia-based organization, begged to differ. "Pro-life Democrats have stayed in the shadows and have been taken for granted long enough," the group said in a statement. "We must be recognized and heard. Right now, we are hearing that current leaders of the Democratic Party do not want us and we should look elsewhere."

Indeed, Democrats are hardly united in their support for abortion-on-demand. Nationally, 28 percent of Democrats consider themselves pro-life, according to [Gallup](#). Missouri State Representative Stacey Newman, a Democrat, "estimates there are at least a dozen pro-life Democrats in the Missouri House alone," wrote the *Times*, adding that a pro-life Democrat defeated a pro-choice one in a primary election for state representative just last week.

With control of the U.S. Senate, among other things, hanging in the balance in November, Democrats may regret having told a significant portion of their voters that they are no longer welcome. As Darryl Jeffries, a 65-year old pro-life Democrat, told the *Star*, the party may have "enlarged the tent" by jettisoning the amendment, "but they made the door smaller."



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