



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 29, 2016

Pro-life Leaders Challenge Trump in Iowa

Just how important a candidate's stance is in the Republican Party on the issue of abortion is about to be tested in the February 1 Iowa caucuses, where New York businessman Donald Trump is locked in a tight battle with Texas Senator Ted Cruz. While Cruz has long been recognized as a strong "pro-lifer" (as are most of the other Republican hopefuls), several pro-life leaders have signed a letter, less than a week before Iowa's "first in the nation" caucus, denouncing Trump as someone who "cannot be trusted" on the issue.



The pro-life leaders who signed the letter urging Iowans to vote for "anyone but Donald Trump" included Jenifer Bowen, the executive director of Iowa Right to Life; Kendra Burger, the director of educational outreach for Iowa Right to Life; Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List; Beverly LaHaye, chairman and founder of Concerned Women for America; Penny Nance, president of Concerned Women for America; and Star Parker, founder and president of Urbancure (shown).

The letter detailed the pro-life leaders' problems with Trump.

As pro-life women leaders from Iowa and across the nation, we urge Republican caucus-goers and voters to support anyone but Donald Trump. On the issue of defending unborn children and protecting women from the violence of abortion, Mr. Trump cannot be trusted and there is, thankfully, an abundance of alternative candidates with proven records of pro-life leadership whom pro-life voters can support. We have come to this conclusion after having listened patiently to numerous debates and news reports, but most importantly to Donald Trump's own words.

The next president will be responsible for as many as four nominations to the Supreme Court. Mr. Trump has given us only one indication of the type of judges he would appoint, and it does not bode well for those who would like to see the court overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Mr. Trump has said his sister, Judge Maryanne Trump Barry, who struck down the Partial Birth Abortion Ban in New Jersey, would be a 'phenomenal' choice for the court. Earlier this month, Mr. Trump also said he thought pro-choice Senator Scott Brown would make a 'very good' Vice President. If one truly believes, as we do, that abortion is the taking of an innocent human life and is committed to the pro-life priorities of ending abortion after five months, and defunding the nation's largest abortion business, Planned Parenthood, it would be a disaster to have a vice president who disagrees.

The letter also criticized Trump for what they contend is his mistreatment of women, specifically mentioning how mocked the face of fellow Republican candidate Carly Fiorina. They also noted that Trump had "profited from the exploitation of women" in his Atlantic City casino hotel, which included the first strip club casino in the country.

Finally, the letter concluded with a plea for "fellow citizens to support an alternative candidate" who will "defend unborn children," adding, "We cannot trust Donald Trump."



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 29, 2016

The next day, in Marshalltown, Iowa, NBC news reporter Peter Alexander attempted to get Trump's reaction to the letter. Trump told Alexander that the writers of the letter "have their choice," and, "There will be plenty of people voting for me, that I can tell you."

When Alexander referenced Trump's appearance on *Meet the Press* with Tim Russert in 1999, in which Trump told Russert, "I'm very pro-choice," Trump demanded Alexander "get out the full statement and read it," and then added that he was "good friends" with the late Tim Russert.

Trump appeared on Russert's program on October 24, 1999, when Trump was considering making a bid for the Reform Party presidential nomination (eventually won by conservative commentator Pat Buchanan). When asked about partial-birth abortion and abortion in the "third trimester," and would a President Trump support a ban on either, Trump said no.

"I'm very pro-choice," Trump told Russert. "I just believe in choice."

Trump told Russert he was personally opposed to abortion, commenting, "I just hate it." He attributed his strong pro-choice views to "maybe a little bit of a New York background.... I was raised in New York, and I work in New York." Many think this is specifically what Trump's primary opponent Ted Cruz was referring to when he said that Trump represented "New York values."

Trump concluded his remarks to Russert with, "I am pro-choice in every respect."

Now, Trump insists that his views on the abortion issue have "evolved."

In the August 2015 Fox News Debate, Trump offered an explanation on his change of mind on abortion. "I've evolved on many issues over the years. And you know who else has? Ronald Reagan evolved on many issues. And I am pro-life. And if you look at the question, I was in business. They asked me a question as to pro-life or choice. And I said that if you let [the quoted excerpt] run, that I hate the concept of abortion. I hate the concept of abortion. And then since then, I've very much evolved. And what happened is friends of mine years ago were going to have a child, and it was going to be aborted. And it wasn't aborted. And that child today is a total superstar, a great, great child. And I saw that. And I saw other instances. And I am very, very proud to say that I am pro-life."

In his book, *The America We Deserve*, Trump told a somewhat different story of why his views have "evolved" since he told Russert he was "pro choice in every respect." In the book, Trump explained, "When Tim Russert asked me on *Meet the Press* if I would ban partial-birth abortion, my pro-choice instincts led me to say no. After the show, I consulted two doctors I respect and, upon learning more about this procedure, I have concluded that I would support a ban." Perhaps Trump changed his mind on partial birth abortion, then, and finally, to a broader opposition to abortion later.

Whatever the specific facts of Trump's present position on abortion, the single biggest impact that a president can have on abortion is in the appointment of federal judges, especially appointments to the Supreme Court. Writing in *National Review*, in August 2015, Ramesh Ponnuru expressed concern — even outrage — over Trump's suggestion that Trump's sister, a federal judge, would make a "phenomenal" Supreme Court justice.

Trump's sister, Maryanne Trump Barry, wrote a decision as an appellate court judge, calling partial-birth abortion a constitutionally protected right. According to Ponnuru, Barry called the New Jersey law banning partial-birth abortion a "desperate attempt" to undermine *Roe v. Wade*.

In the words of Trump's sister, New Jersey's attempt to ban partial-birth abortion was "based on semantic machinations, irrational line-drawing, and an obvious attempt to inflame public opinion



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 29, 2016

instead of logic or medical evidence.”

Despite the efforts of Judge Barry to strike down the New Jersey ban as unconstitutional, it was later upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court — by a margin of one vote. This, of course, illustrates the importance of each appointment to the Supreme Court.

Trump’s exact position on the issue of abortion is difficult to determine, because he is reluctant to provide details during his present campaign. This past week, Trump said, “I just don’t want to talk about that right now. Everybody knows my views and I think my views are very plain.”

Last January, Trump told Mark Halperin of Bloomberg News, “I’m pro-life, with the caveats. You have to have the caveats.” He specifically rejected the position that abortion was murder, answering, “No ... with the caveats, life of the mother, incest, and rape.”

When then asked if abortion would be murder if performed other than for those exceptions, Trump said, “It depends when.”

For the past generation, the pro-life position has served as a litmus test for Republican presidential hopefuls. Since the nomination of former California Governor Ronald Reagan in 1980, every Republican nominee has proclaimed himself as pro-life. When Reagan’s vice-president, George Herbert Walker Bush, made his own presidential bid in 1988, he had made the switch from pro-choice to pro-life. When Mitt Romney ran against Ted Kennedy for U.S. Senate in Massachusetts, Romney insisted that he was “pro-choice,” but by the time Romney ran for president in 2008, he had flipped his position to “pro-life.” Former New York Mayor Rudi Guiliani was considered by many as the front-runner for the Republican nomination in 2008, but his pro-choice position was regarded as a killer to his presidential hopes.

It is possible that the conversions of Bush, Romney, and Trump to a modified pro-life position are sincere changes in their views, but apparently, the pro-life women who signed the letter pleading with Iowa Republicans to reject Trump do not believe it is the case with him. No doubt, should Trump win the Iowa caucuses in spite of the stiff opposition of pro-life activists, the litmus test requiring Republican presidential hopefuls to be pro-life, will be questioned.

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College. His book, History’s Greatest Libels, is a challenge to some of the unfair attacks on such historical figures as Joseph McCarthy, Christopher Columbus, and Clarence Thomas.



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



Subscribe

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.