



South Dakota Catholic Conference

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Joint Statement of the Spiritual Leaders of the Roman Catholic Dioceses of South Dakota on Certification of Abortion Amendment

May 20, 2024

Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church

On May 16, 2024, the South Dakota Secretary of State certified for the November 5, 2024 election ballot a proposed constitutional amendment that would legalize abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. The Secretary has designated the proposal as Amendment G.

This amendment would overturn dozens of pro-life laws in South Dakota that protect preborn children and their mothers from the dangers of abortion. The certification decision may be challenged in court due to irregularities in the petition circulation process, some of which were previously [identified](#) by the state attorney general. If a legal challenge ensues, we should pray that it results in the removal of this extreme measure from the ballot, given the threat it poses to South Dakota's most vulnerable citizens.

However, given the inherent uncertainties surrounding any litigation, prudence requires us to prepare for the scenario that Amendment G will be decided by voters in the November 5 election. We urge Catholics and all people of good will to study this measure carefully, understand the devastating consequences it would have for our state, and work with great determination to ensure this measure does not become a part of our state's constitution.

During the nearly 50 years that *Roe v. Wade* was in effect, an estimated 46,000 preborn girls and boys perished from abortion in our state. This scourge came to an end on June 24, 2022, when the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the *Dobbs* decision, finally allowing South Dakota to enforce laws that protect the human rights of preborn children. Amendment G would reverse all this progress and create a regime of unrestricted abortion that would be far worse even than what was in effect under *Roe*. Amendment G would not even permit health and safety regulations for most abortions. (To learn more about the abortion amendment, visit the [South Dakota Catholic Conference resource page](#)).

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), describes preborn children as “the most defenseless and innocent among us.” The Holy Father goes on to say, “Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this.”

This is exactly what Amendment G would do. It proposes that we treat preborn children as a disposable commodity, and it would prohibit any efforts by the legislature, the governor, or the judiciary to recognize and protect their human rights.

St. Pope John Paul II once said, “A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn and the dying.” How will history judge our society in South Dakota? The answer to that question depends greatly on the actions we take during the next several months.

We believe God has set us here at this time and place to fight for the protection of human life with unique zeal and devotion. We renew the call made in [Bearing the Face of Jesus](#), the 2023 pastoral letter on protecting human dignity:

“At this decisive moment in our state’s history, we call on Christians and all persons of good will to reject the proposed abortion amendment that would usher in a new ‘culture of death’ in South Dakota. We exhort the faithful to provide practical assistance to the campaign that has been organized to defeat the amendment and to take responsibility for educating their family members, friends, and co-workers on the threat the amendment poses to South Dakota.”

The faithful can learn more on how to help defeat Amendment G by visiting the [Life Defense Fund](#). As we embark on this great endeavor to protect preborn children, let us pray that God’s favor will be ours and that He will prosper the work of our hands (Psalm 90).



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