

Pro-Life Measures Defeated at Polls

Advocates prepare for uphill battle to end abortion under pro-choice president.



[] Pro-life advocates say they will continue working to end abortion despite defeats on ballot measures in South Dakota, Colorado and California.

“We will continue working at both the state and federal levels in the days ahead to advance the culture of life,” said Charmaine Yoest, president and CEO of Americans United for Life (AUL) in a statement Wednesday.

“These results do not square with an American electorate that is increasingly pro-life,” she added. “The life movement will reassess and regroup for the next election cycle with new ways to communicate, that even the weakest amongst us should be welcomed in life and defended in law.”

In Colorado, 73 percent of voters rejected an amendment that would have defined a fertilized human egg as a person, making abortion the legal equivalent of murder. From the start, the measure faced challenges even from abortion opponents, who said the amendment’s passage wouldn’t end abortion but rather lead to a legal challenge that would result in a reaffirmation of abortion rights.

And for the third time in six years, Proposition 4 failed to pass in California, with 52 percent of voters opposing the measure. Also known as “Sarah’s Law,” the measure would have required parental notification at least 48 hours before performing an abortion on a minor.

Hours after its defeat, supporters were expecting to launch a fourth ballot attempt, the *Los Angeles Times* reported. “The only questions are exactly when, exactly where and exactly

how,” said Don Sebastiani, a former California lawmaker and one of the measure’s leading proponents.

By far the most ambitious measure was in South Dakota, where 55 percent of voters opposed an initiative that would have banned abortion in all cases except those involving rape, incest or the mother’s health. Initiated Measure 11 was expected to spark a court battle leading to the Supreme Court.

“Although ultimately unsuccessful, Initiated Measure 11 furthered the debate over the impact of abortion on women, the unborn and our nation,” said AUL Senior Counsel Clarke Forsythe. “Given the mounting evidence of the negative impact of abortion, this is a discussion that we must continue to pursue in the days ahead.”

In addition to losing on ballots in South Dakota, Colorado and California, the pro-life community suffered defeats on initiatives elsewhere. Voters in Washington approved Initiative 1000 to become the second state after Oregon to legalize physician-assisted suicide while in Michigan, voters approved Proposal 2, an amendment that will allow government funding for research on human embryos produced in fertility clinics.

Pro-life leaders are preparing for an uphill battle as they face what they are calling one of the most pro-choice administrations in recent history. During the campaign, President-elect Barack Obama expressed his support for the Freedom of Choice Act, which would codify Roe v. Wade’s protections and guarantee abortion access even if the landmark Supreme Court decision were ever overturned.

“It is the most radical piece of legislation on the pro-choice agenda,” said Mathew Staver, president of legal advocacy group Liberty Counsel, which supported the South Dakota ballot measure. “If passed, that would wipe away almost every restriction on abortion, including parental notification ... and it would create a cause of action for someone who interferes with a person exercising their right [to abortion].

"I think what we have to do is work to stifle that kind of immoral legislation that would come from Barack Obama," he continued. "That will be a huge [task] over the next four years. On the good side of things, we've got 111th Congress which is probably more liberal than the 110th but still not as liberal as Barack Obama."

Staver said the pro-life movement was outspent by pro-choice advocates during the 2008 election season. Yet he is optimistic about the future of the pro-life cause. "I think the good news for life is that a younger generation is coming up that is more pro-life than older generations," Staver said.

-Adrienne S. Gaines