

Pro-life Voters Differ on Value of Abortion Laws

A recent survey found that most of Barack Obama's pro-life supporters don't think legislation reduces abortion.



[] Exit polls show that a majority of evangelicals who backed Barack Obama during the presidential election don't believe pro-life legislation reduces abortion.

A survey conducted by found that 86.7 percent of pro-life voters who supported Obama believed the best way to curb abortion is by preventing unintended pregnancy through education and contraception, and assisting pregnant women financially. Only 10.9 percent believed legal restriction was most effective.

Among pro-life voters who supported Sen. John McCain, 63.8 percent believed the best way to reduce abortion is through legal restriction, while 35.3 percent said prevention would be most effective.

The two groups also had different views on the impact the president would have on the abortion rate. Of Obama's evangelical supporters, 53 percent said the abortion rate was unlikely to change under either an Obama or McCain presidency, while 28 percent of McCain supporters agreed with that sentiment.

Meanwhile, 25 percent of Obama's pro-life supporters expected the abortion rate to fall during his presidency, and 59 percent of McCain supporters believed abortions would have decreased if the Arizona senator had been elected. Pro-life advocates note that nearly 40 percent of McCain's pro-life supporters didn't believe the Republican candidate would have made much impact on the abortion rate.

Steve Ertelt, editor of , said the findings show that pro-life advocates need to do more to convince voters that pro-

life laws reduce abortion. He said states such as Mississippi, South Carolina, Michigan and Missouri, which have several laws restricting abortion, have seen abortion rates drop between 20 percent and 50 percent.

He also pointed to research conducted by Michael New, Ph.D., in association with the Family Research Council. New, a political science professor at the University of Alabama, credits pro-life legislation with reducing abortion in 12 of the last 14 years. Refuting claims that abortion had increased slightly since President Bush was inaugurated, New said the abortion rate dropped 14 percent between 1992 and 2000, but states that were active in passing pro-life laws saw even larger declines.

In its exit poll, *Beliefnet* also found that abortion was the most important issue for the majority of evangelicals who supported McCain (65 percent), while the economy topped the list for Obama's evangelical supporters (64 percent). Roughly 44 percent of McCain's evangelical supporters cited the economy as their most important issue while 10 percent of evangelicals who voted for Obama said abortion was the most significant issue. —**Adrienne S. Gaines**