

Pro-Life Voters and the New Trump Platform

There is a new challenge for pro-life voters as we approach the 2024 elections. On the one hand, in my opinion, it is impossible for a truly pro-life voter to vote for a Democratic presidential candidate given the radical, pro-abortion stance of that party. That holds true as well for the positions of President Biden and Vice President Harris, which continue to lurch farther to the left. But now that the Republican National Committee has embraced the watered-down platform crafted by the Trump team, do we simply acquiesce and vote Republican? Do we refuse to cast our vote and insist on righteous standards? Or is there another way?

For those not familiar with the ongoing debate, since 1984, the Republican Party's platform has contained language supporting an "amendment to the Constitution and legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to children before birth." Its pro-life plank has been extensive and strong.

In contrast, not one of the 20 promises listed in the new party platform mentions abortion, while the paragraph discussing abortion in the new platform simply says:

"We proudly stand for families and life. We believe that the 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees that no person can be denied life or liberty without due process, and that the states are therefore free to pass laws protecting those rights. After 51 years because of us, that power has been given to the state and to a vote of the people. We will oppose late term abortion while supporting mothers and policies that advance prenatal care, access to birth control, and IVF."

Senator Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn., wanting to reassure pro-life GOP voters, said, "The Republican Party is a pro-life party. It's a pro-family party. It is always going to be that."

Many will surely say in reply, "Seriously? That is supposed to be a pro-life statement?"

First, if the baby in the womb is a person and "no person can be denied life or liberty without due process," then the states are not "free to pass laws protecting those rights," they are duty-bound to pass those laws. And why doesn't the new platform assert that the baby in the womb *is* a person?

Second, if the issue on the table had been slavery, would we celebrate a platform that boasted that now, each state could vote on the legality of slavery? Hardly. We would say that slavery needed to be outlawed, plain and simple.

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How, then, is this a "pro-life" platform? (On a lesser note, since in vitro fertilization is such a hot-button, controversial issue, even within the GOP, why emphasize it in the statement?)

For good reason, a July 9 Newsweek article was titled "Donald Trump's Abortion Stance Sparks Republican Fury."

During the presidential debate, Trump emphasized clearly that in his mind, abortion was a state issue, not a federal issue, because of which he would not sign into law a federal abortion ban if elected. He also emphasized that this was something the people got to vote on state by state, and that, in his mind, was the right venue for passing laws regarding abortion.

As for his own position, he continued to emphasize his opposition to late-term abortion as well as restating that he

believed in the three exceptions of rape, incest and the life of the mother.

Is this simply pragmatism on the former president's part, knowing how volatile the issue of abortion has become in the aftermath of the overturning of Roe? Is Trump simply hedging his bets, stressing what the vast majority of Americans believe—namely, that late-term abortion is wrong—while also recognizing that pro-abortion voters apparently pushed the 2022 midterms in the direction of the Democrats?

Only Trump and his closest advisers know. (And of course, God knows.) We can only speculate.

But what we do know is that, for the first time in 40 years, the pro-life language of the GOP platform has been greatly softened, meaning it can hardly be viewed as “the party of life.” To the contrary, it is the party that is less open to abortion.

What, then, are the choices for pro-life voters?

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It does not appear that Robert F. Kennedy Jr. would be any stronger on this issue, while for any other third-party candidate, pro-life votes would be wasted in terms of actually electing a pro-life leader. In that regard, it would be more of a statement, a protest vote, than anything else.

What about simply accepting the current realities and voting GOP? At least that would leave things in the hands of the states—and thereby, in the hands of the voters—without running the risk of a Democratic candidate reversing the progress that has been made in recent years and trying to reestablish Roe. It would eliminate the possibility of a Democratic president appointing radical, leftist judges to our federal courts and,

ultimately, to the Supreme Court.

On the other hand, by allowing the platform to be weakened in the name of electoral pragmatism, that might signal a whole new wave of GOP candidates who are less committed to the pro-life cause but who are allegedly better than the Democrats. It might also embolden current GOP congressmen to soften their own stances in the name of electability, thereby continuing to erode the GOP's stance for life. In the end, there might be little to distinguish the two parties when it comes to abortion.

My counsel would be that we do not take this new platform lying down but do our best to work for a change until the last minute possible. If, in the end, we cannot bring about change, then we still work with the GOP for the moment while making it clear behind the scenes that the next GOP candidate will have to embrace our pro-life position; otherwise, they will not make it through the primaries.

That's a battle we cannot fight now, since Trump is clearly the GOP standard bearer. But it's a battle we must fight in the future.

That being said, there's a silver lining to all this. As I wrote in "Turn the Tide," we must work relentlessly on changing hearts as well as changing laws, and now that Trump has made clear that he is not a pro-life champion, we cannot make the mistake of looking to him to do what only the church can do.

So, we vote our conscience one day in November, but we spend 365 days a year being salt and light.

With that mentality, and with God's help, we can become much more of a pro-life nation.

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