

Pro-Life Advocates Pray Supreme Court Strikes Down Abortion Clinic ‘Bubble Zones’

The Pro-Life Action League is calling on all **pro-life Christians** to pray daily from now until Wednesday, Jan. 15. The focus of these prayers is that the U.S. Supreme Court will strike down all of the restrictive “bubble zone” laws that have deprived pro-life sidewalk counselors of their constitutional right to freedom of speech.

On Jan. 15, the high court will hear oral arguments in the case of *McCullen v. Coakley*, challenging Massachusetts’ “**bubble zone**,” the most restrictive in the country. Under the law, pro-lifers may not speak to abortion clinic clients within 35 feet of the entrance. This prohibition effectively scuttles the life-saving outreach of pro-life sidewalk counselors while exempting clinic staff and “agents” (a term which could apply to any abortion advocate).

The pro-life plaintiffs are also asking the court to overturn its ruling in *Hill v. Colorado*, which upheld a less restrictive “bubble zone” in 2000. Since that time, similar laws have been enacted in many jurisdictions across the country—including a 2009 “bubble zone” in the city of Chicago, where the Pro-Life Action League is headquartered.

Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League, offers some specifics.

“Three of the dissenters in the *Hill v. Colorado* ruling—Justices Scalia, Thomas and Kennedy—are still on the court,” he explains. “Only Justices Ginsberg and Breyer remain from the majority. If any two of the new justices on the

court—Kagan, Sotomayor, Alito and Roberts—were to side with the Hill minority, all the ‘bubble zone’ laws in the country could be struck down.

“It would be a great victory for the Massachusetts ‘bubble zone’ law to be stricken down, since similarly restrictive laws continue to be enacted against sidewalk counselors, most recently in Portland, Maine. If all the ‘bubble zones’ in the nation were to be invalidated, it would be a tremendous victory not only for the First Amendment but for the countless unborn children whose lives would be saved.”

Scheidler describes how in the time since the Chicago “bubble zone” was enacted in November 2009, sidewalk counselors in the city have faced continued harassment from police, many of whom are unclear about the actual provisions of the confusing ordinance, and that “bubble zones” elsewhere have likewise hampered sidewalk counselors.

It is with these variables in mind that Scheidler and the Pro-Life Action League are calling for this specific period of daily prayer by all pro-life supporters. Scheidler, who is Catholic, suggests a daily novena of the Lord’s Prayer but welcomes the petitions of all pro-life people that the Supreme Court justices will listen to the plaintiffs’ arguments in *McCullen v. Coakley* with open hearts.