

My Friend Scott Plakon Wins a Battle for Life

Everyone, it seems, wants to make a difference. But Rep.  Scott Plakon, who was elected recently to the Florida Legislature, has had an opportunity to affect the lives of thousands of unborn children. It's a story we were able to "break" in our Charisma News Online e-newsletter. You can read Steve Ghiringhelli's report below.

I knew about this as it was happening because Scott is my good friend and we communicate regularly. I worked to help him get elected because he not only is a good leader with strong business skills but also was committed to standing for the right values when issues would come up in the Florida Legislature.

You may remember that I recently named him as one of the people I admired most in 2008. He took a risk and ran for office when there was no certainty that he would win, and he did it at great personal sacrifice to himself, his family, and his business. You can read what I wrote about him and others in the Strang Report by clicking [here](#).

The amazing thing that happened was that in his very first week in the legislature—a special session called by Gov. Charlie Crist to slash \$2.3 billion from the state budget—the Florida Legislature voted to cut the support for a state-funded crisis pregnancy program, the Florida Pregnancy Support Services Program, by more than a half million dollars. Ultimately it was Gov. Crist who vetoed the cut to the agency, and Scott in his characteristically humble fashion was quick to give the credit to the Republican governor who had spoken about the agency while he was campaigning and who has stood for the rights of the unborn in more than one instance.

But those who knew what was going on behind the scenes testify to the fact that it was Scott's untiring persistence in working with both representatives and senators in the Florida Legislature that helped secure the funding for the program. And he did it in his very first week.

Chris Dorworth, Scott's good friend and a freshman legislator representing District 34—which includes the area where our office is located in Lake Mary—is also a strong advocate of the rights of the unborn, and he worked with Scott to help prevent the cut to the program's funding. Chris is a jovial, blond-haired man who is barely 32 years old. He's a rabid Florida Gator fan (as a University of Florida alum, I'm also a Gator fan, but not to the extent that Chris is!), and he is also emerging as a leader in the House.

Chris told me that even if Scott serves in the legislature for many years, he might never again have an opportunity to make as much of a difference as he did in his first week in Tallahassee. Chris enjoys describing Scott at work. He made up a phrase to describe how legislators felt after being tirelessly lobbied by Scott. He called it "being Plakonized."

Gov. Crist had called for the legislators to remove \$2.3 billion, or about 4 percent, from the state budget. Virtually every program in the state was cut. In one of the legislative hearings, someone had mischaracterized the \$2 million pregnancy support program as an "abstinence program" and completely eliminated it from the budget. Had the cut occurred, the 15,000 lower-income women faced with a crisis pregnancy who use the program each year would have had no governmental agency to provide important education in prenatal care, childbirth, parenting and adoption, which Gov. Crist has highlighted as an important priority of his administration.

Chris Dorworth said that liberal politicians who support a

woman's "right to choose" abortion often campaign by saying that while they believe it should be legal, abortion should be as rare as possible. If that's so, he says, the state needs programs like the pregnancy support program to make abortions rare instead of common. Yet it appeared as if the program was going to be eliminated due to a lack of funding.

Through careful negotiation behind the scenes, Scott and his allies were able to restore 71 percent of the funding—enough to keep the program alive. However, Chris and Scott presented to Gov. Crist the option of vetoing the measure completely, which would allow the original budget for the program to remain intact. The governor took the option—and no cut was made.

In a month in which the pro-life movement suffered numerous setbacks through policy changes made by the Obama administration in Washington, the assurance of continuing support for the Florida Pregnancy Support Services Program was a pro-life victory. Florida is not only the fourth-largest state in the country but also a "battleground state," where many issues that are debated and decided upon affect other states.

I'm encouraged that this happened. I'm grateful that Scott Plakon was in office at the right time. And I'm glad that we were in a position to not only report the news but also give the background to the story.

In closing, I want to encourage you to let the governor know how much you appreciate his vetoing the cut of funding for the Florida Pregnancy Support Services Program. It's important to speak up and tell our legislators when we support their actions—especially when they are standing for as important an issue as the sanctity of human life. You can thank Gov. Crist for the action he took by calling (850) 488-7146 or e-mailing @.

One last thing: Scott has a personal interest in the pro-life movement because his mother became pregnant with him at age 17 when she was unmarried. Even though abortion was not legal at that time, it was fairly common, and there were those who encouraged her to get an abortion. Thankfully, she didn't. And now Scott is able to fight for the rights of the unborn in this generation.

As usual, please leave your comments. And forward this to friends who are interested in the rights of the unborn.

Steve Strang