

Alabama is a Long Way From Being Truly Pro-Life

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Alabamians are, or at least claim to be, pro-life. Based on Christian principles, many Alabamians believe abortion should be illegal. So the bills banning almost all abortions recently introduced by Senator Hank Erwin (R-Montevallo) and Representative Nick Williams (R-McIntosh) because “the majority of people in this state are pro-life...” came as no surprise.

The latest statistics show that in 2004 there were just over 11,000 abortions in Alabama. Credible studies also indicate that poverty substantially contributes to the number of abortions. All Alabamians of faith should find this a disturbing tragedy.

But is it enough to merely support legislation banning abortion? Does this satisfy our moral obligation to fully embrace the dignity of life?

In writing of a “seamless garment of love”, the late Cardinal Bernardin defined pro-life as meaning much more than restricting abortion. To him, genuinely pro-life communities support pre and post natal care of mother and child through healthcare and subsistence safety nets, as well as access to decent housing, education and job training.

Even a cursory snapshot of our state reveals we are a long way from truly embracing the dignity of life. Alabama has among the highest rates of poverty, especially children living in poverty. Over a quarter of our people do not get primary healthcare with too many Alabama mothers, especially in the rural areas, receiving inadequate pre-natal care. Our education funding is grossly inadequate and child advocates complain that our foster care support is less than what it costs to board a dog in a kennel.

Especially since poor women resort to abortion in far greater numbers, why are we not aggressively fighting poverty? Why do we not guarantee all pregnant women access to adequate pre-natal care, nutrition, drug and alcohol treatment and job training? Why is our public support of most other life-affirming areas so pitifully low?

The reason is those of us at higher levels of income and wealth are unwilling to bear the cost of a truly pro-life community. We are unwilling to accept the high-sacrifice of state and local taxes which raise sufficient revenues needed to support such an endeavor. Instead we fool ourselves into thinking that merely supporting anti-abortion legislation is all that it takes to be pro-life.

The truth is being genuinely pro-life requires embracing Judeo-Christian guided tax policy.

Jesus Christ states that the most important thing in life, in other words what it really means to be pro-life, is to “love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself”.

The moral principles of biblical justice, which elaborate on what Jesus meant, teach that all persons are created in God’s image and therefore must have a reasonable opportunity to reach their divine potential to do God’s work. Due to our inescapable greedy tendencies resulting from

the Fall of humankind, a pro-life community cannot rely on charity to meet these standards and must compel taxation.

The teachings of Jesus also address how the tax burden should be shared in a pro-life community among those at different levels of income and wealth. Real faith results in significant personal sacrifice under the moral principles “to whom much is given, much more is required”, and, wealth should only be held with a “light grip”. For those enjoying greater levels of income and wealth this requires higher levels of financial sacrifice under a moderately progressive tax structure.

Despite the recent and encouraging income tax reform, Alabama’s inadequate and regressive state and local tax structure does not remotely reflect a real pro-life community.

As we debate the merits of the proposed legislation banning almost all abortions, we must confront the ugly facts proving that Alabama is not genuinely pro-life even though many Alabamians are against abortion. Until we are also willing to accept the high-sacrifice of Judeo-Christian guided tax policy, a pro-life justification for supporting this legislation is a hollow low-sacrifice position with no moral credibility.

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