

## The Myths that Bind Us

As we look ahead to the task before us, in light of recent legislative results not going as we had hoped, it could be helpful to heed the Apostle Paul's advice in his first letter to the Thessalonians, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances" (I Thessalonians 5:16-18). If we focus on our defeat and how much more difficult we think it will be to reach our communities when abortion is legal ("So how can it be wrong?"), then we already have one foot in despair and the other in fatigue. For the past few months, it has been expedient to focus on legislation above all else, and that was where we needed to be as a cause for life in Missouri.

However, let's not forget that the ultimate goal is to change hearts and minds to embrace the sanctity of life. Maintaining pro-life laws is one *vehicle* to this end, not the end itself. Pro-life legislation is a way to save lives while we strive to influence men, women, and families for life. Yet even if Missouri is burdened with extremely permissive abortion laws, our aim remains the same...to influence men, women, and families for life. Perhaps these dire circumstances will light a fire and shift our focus from resting on our legal laurels to pounding the pro-life pavement.

That being said, there is always value in being informed so that we can dispel negative rhetoric about abortion bans and the flowery language used to defend the practice (NRL News, 10/24). Euphemisms are handy shields to ward off a confrontation and the pro-abortion crowd has elevated their use to an art form. Historian Paul Johnson once observed, "Euphemism is a human device to conceal the horrors of reality." Note the following examples:

- Pro-choice. sounds so delightful until one clearly delineates what is being chosen.
- Abortion as a medical procedure. Medicine is meant to heal not harm, and the bland term "procedure" hides the profound implications of the act.
- Example: vacuum aspiration defined as gentle suction. These are tame terms to describe the graphic nature of forcefully extracting fetal contents (a euphemism itself) from the womb.
- Inventory & components. These terms clinically describe the practice of ensuring that all *body parts* are accounted for after an abortion.
- Reproductive right. An insidious attempt to turn the pernicious into the benign. Reproductive rights, which precede actual reproduction, are not on trial. Since pregnancy is the *result* of reproduction, abortion is actually a *parental* act.

Below are a few myths that illustrate the subterfuge used by those who try to convince us that we "need" abortion because abortion bans harm women and anti-abortion is anti-woman (see NRL News, 11/4/24 for specific myths about Christina Zielke, Ryan Hamilton's wife, Amber Thurman, and Amari Marsh). The trend is afoot in the name of "women's health" to manipulate the narrative to the degree that any dissent is viewed as misogynistic, uncompassionate, ignorant, or hate-filled. (I've been called worse.) There is a double standard at play. Women are often encouraged to abort their offspring to preserve their self-defined quality of life, while men would be prosecuted for killing theirs.

**Myth/Claim: Pro-lifers only care about the fetus up to birth, and want to force women to give birth with no regard for her circumstances.**

**Reality:** We want to celebrate the essence of women and protect them from a practice that damages born women and destroys future women. Three thousand pregnancy resource centers and homes in the United States do not exist to turn a profit. They exist to guide women through a trying but temporary trial in their lives and foster health, wellness, and a thriving future for them and their child.

**Myth: Anti-abortion laws don't decrease abortion.**

**Claim:** Total abortion numbers have increased since Dobbs, which implies abortion restrictions don't decrease abortions and may even paradoxically increase abortions.

**Reality:** Total abortion numbers in the U.S. have been rising since 2017 (well before Dobbs) largely due to increased access to abortion pills. Granted, a decrease in abortion numbers in a pro-life state could simply mean that bordering states have experienced an increase. However, data indicates that states with pro-life laws have seen a decrease in abortion in conjunction with an increase in birth rates.

**Myth:** Doctors are fleeing states with anti-abortion laws.

**Claim:** Medical residents and doctors are leaving or refusing to move to states with anti-abortion laws out of concern for their ability to safely practice medicine.

**Reality:** Research that shows that medical residents are less likely to want to work in pro-life states fails to mention that it only surveyed residents who had opted for advanced (huh?) abortion training. Residency programs continue to receive more applications than positions they can fill and continue to fill their positions at rates similar to years past.

**Myth/Claim:** States with total abortion bans do not allow abortion for any reason, even for the life of the mother.

**Reality:** ALL 50 states have *at least* an “abortion to save the physical life of the mother” exception.

**Myth:** Texas’ heartbeat law increased *infant* mortality rates.

**Claim:** Infant death increased in Texas because women were required to carry “doomed” pregnancies to term.

**Reality:** Infant death logically increased because infant births increased, but overall mortality rate remained stable.

Abortions only decrease the raw number of *infant* mortality because they increase *fetal* mortality, favoring intentional death of many to death by medical condition of a few.

**Myth:** Texas heartbeat law increased *maternal* mortality rates.

**Claim:** The number of women in Texas who died pregnancy-related deaths skyrocketed following Texas’ 2021 heartbeat law.

**Reality:** Texas maternal mortality rate decreased from 2021 to 2022. (Blatant is the new white this season.)

**Myth/Claim:** An Idaho hospital stopped providing labor and delivery services because of the state’s anti-abortion law.

**Reality:** The hospital closed its labor and delivery unit because it didn’t have enough patients to afford it. Deliveries have been decreasing in the department for years due to overall aging of the county’s population. (Not enough babies...hmmm.)

It’s sad that we need to be vigilantly on the alert for misdirection and misinformation, but the collective group of abortion advocates seem to be operating under the misguided notion that lies are innocuous if they get you to your endgame. Oh how good it feels to know that we can be completely transparent because the truth can withstand scrutiny.