

Catholic Christians Supporting CI 100
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Open letter to the Catholic Bishops of Montana

We, as Catholic Christians supporting CI 100 write you, the Bishops of Montana, hoping to increase communication amongst those who oppose abortion and agree that “Life Begins at Conception.” We urge your reconsideration of your position regarding CI 100.

We have read, reviewed and studied your one page statement on CI 100, dated Feb. 26, 2008, your 3 page memo to Priests, Deacons and Parish Administrators dated Feb. 25, 2008, and the transcript of the Feb. 28, 2008 speech by Moe Wosepka, executive director of the Montana Catholic Conference, all pertaining to CI 100.

We find that we agree with you 100% on the key statements supporting life and opposing abortion. We agree with your 4 strategies implemented for reducing abortions. We, as Catholic Christians, all remain dedicated to the protection of life from conception to natural death. However, we were surprised and disappointed to find that you “will not support CI 100.” While you may “not believe CI 100 is the most beneficial venue to pursue necessary change,” it is certainly a valid and direct effort, being conducted by people who share your goal of ending abortion.

In a speech to Catholics in Bozeman, titled *The Position of the Catholic Bishops and MT Catholic Conference of CI 100*, Mr. Wosepka stated: “Following *Evangelium Vitae*, the bishops’ *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* calls for ‘a great campaign in support of life’ on all fronts. We must pray educate, advocate and care for human life in ever new and creative ways, including prayer for unforeseen opportunities to bring and end to abortion.”

Catholic Christian supporters of CI 100 see this proposed amendment to the Montana Constitution as just such a new and creative way of opposing and ending abortion. If approved by the voters of Montana, CI 100 would in plain, simple and relevant language change the Montana constitution to read:

“Section 3. Right to life and inalienable rights. (1) Every person has a paramount and fundamental right to life. (2) All persons are created free and have certain inalienable rights from the moment of conception... (3) As used in this article, “person” includes a human being at all stages of human development or life, including the state of fertilization, regardless of age, health, level of functioning, or condition of dependency. (4) Subsections (1) and (3) and the language regarding the moment of conception in subsection (2) must be implemented by legislation.”

The language of CI 100 attempts to follow the directive of John Paul II in the Gospel of Life to oppose abortion in creative ways and also is in agreement with the pronouncements of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in their document, released in Nov, 2007, ‘Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship’ which states:

“Para. 64 Abortion, the deliberate killing of a human being before birth, is never morally acceptable and must always be opposed.”

“Para. 65. Our conference supports laws and policies to protect human life to the maximum degree possible, including constitutional protection for the unborn and legislative efforts to end abortion and euthanasia.”

Hence, the objective and goals of CI 100 are consistent with Catholic Church teaching.

We surmise from your above cited comments on CI 100 that you do not agree with language, strategy, or possible end result of the implementation of CI 100. It is clear from your comments that the legal opinion from the Bopp Coleson Law Firm has strongly influenced your thinking, while the opinion of the Thomas More Law Center countering Bopp’s opinion was only given a mere mention. This is especially troubling since the Thomas More opinion, as well as that of Judie Brown, President of the American Life League, support CI 100 and quote from Justice Blackmun in the *Roe v Wade* decision, “(If the) suggestion of personhood [of the pre born] is established, the [abortion rights] case, of course collapses, for the fetus’ right to life is then guaranteed specifically by the [14th] Amendment.” Thus a so called “personhood” Amendment such as CI 100 could take the question of personhood all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

Your 3 page “memo” speculates as to what the results and opinions would be from the U.S. and Montana Supreme Courts...this is speculation (as in Bopp memo) and the final composition and opinion of these courts would be years away and cannot be accurately predicted today...especially (as folk knowledge quips) “because if you put 2 lawyers or 2 judges in a room together you will get at least 3 opinions!”

But more important to this discussion is a question of where we as Catholic Christians place our faith. Do we wish to place our trust and faith in lawyers, memos from law firms, judges or justices? Or do we wish to place our trust and faith in the Lord our God? The answer is clear. We place our trust in the one God who can overcome the impossible...the same God who caused the Pharaoh to release the Jewish people from slavery after the first Passover. The same God who in Ezek 37:4-5 said “Dry bones hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: See! I will bring Spirit into you that you may come to life.” Who can believe such a thing? Yet we do! Because we

also believe the seemingly impossible events we remember this week in the Triduum: The bread and wine changed to the Body and Blood, the death on a cross by our Lord for our sins, and the resurrection from the dead by the Son of God, Jesus the Christ. These are impossible things to believe, and yet we do believe them.

If we believe these things, and many other impossible things happen through God, how then can we doubt His ability to overturn a wrong court opinion such as *Roe v Wade*?

The strategies of the past 35 years to overturn this decision have not been successful...50 million aborted babies testify to this. If the Catholic Church had made available for our consideration an alternative constitutional initiative or amendment to the Montana Constitution that achieved the cessation of abortion, we would support such an effort. However, to date, there is no such alternate proposal to change Montana law or constitution.

Thus, Catholic Christians supporting CI 100 will continue the petition effort to place this issue in front of the people of Montana at the November general election. This effort is now dramatically more difficult as a result of your memo “disallowing support for CI 100 in our parishes and church sponsored organizations, be it through endorsement, financial support, signature gathering, or distribution of promotional materials.” We have encountered Catholic’s who previously committed to supporting and circulating CI 100 petitions, who now feel they can not support CI 100, now feel they cannot circulate petitions, and now refuse to turn in the petition signatures they have already gathered! Entire local councils of the Knights of Columbus, despite previously committing to support CI 100, have now been forced to withdraw their support.

The Catholic Church considered and respected for years as a leader in the fight against abortion, is now looked at with disbelief and perhaps contempt by many in the anti-abortion movement. Are we as Catholics to become the laughing stock of both sides of the Life/Abortion debate? Or, are we to continue as part of the leadership of a united team seeking to end abortion?

Catholic Christians Supporting CI 100 wants to make clear that this letter is not about closing doors or burning bridges with you, the Bishops of Montana. Quite the opposite. We are looking for better ways to work together to achieve our common ultimate goals: defining that life begins at conception and ending abortion in Montana and eventually throughout the U.S.

The Montana Catholic Conference previously supported HB 403, sponsored by Rep. Rick Jore, in the 2007 legislative session. This bill was identical to the current CI 100. In his testimony before the Montana House Judiciary Committee, Moe Wosepka of the Montana Catholic Conference testified: “In favor of HB 403. Catholic teaching is consistent in commitment to Life from Conception to natural death.” He concluded by saying “The teaching is constant. And within that frame we support efforts to recognize Life Begins at Conception.”

The language the Montana Catholic Conference supported a year ago in HB 403 is today embodied in CI 100. The end goal, to define that Life Begins at Conception and put an end to abortion are the same.

Thus Catholic Christians Supporting CI 100 ask you, the Catholic Bishops of Montana, to reconsider your position regarding CI 100. Both Rep. Rick Jore and others who are Catholic Christians have requested, over the past 5 months (through Moe Wosepka) that you the Bishops meet with Rep. Jore and discuss CI 100. Unfortunately, no such meeting between you and Rep. Jore has taken place.

Rep. Jore and Catholics Christians Supporting CI 100 remain available, willing and desirous of a meeting with you to better communicate the strategy of CI 100, to answer your questions, to find areas of agreement, and to once again work towards a united effort to achieve our common goal.

Your prayerful consideration of this request will be greatly appreciated.

Bill Myers for
Catholic Christians for CI 100
including
Jim VanSickle
Dick and Margaret Green
Bill Crane
Erin Sigl
Etc.

Catholic Christians Supporting CI 100 is a grassroots association gathering signatures to place CI 100 on the November 2008 ballot. For information and endorsements re: CI 100, go to www.Life2008.org.