



ERLC Supports Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act

Southern Baptists affirm that every human is created in the image of God. As stated in a 2015 resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Bible “clearly and consistently affirms that human life is formed by God in His image and is therefore worthy of honor and dignity.” Further, the Convention’s *Baptist Faith & Message* affirms that “children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord” and calls us to “speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.”

Legal protection for unborn humans is a justice issue. Medical science confirms that a new human life begins from the moment of fertilization, one that is genetically unique of both parents. Babies do not magically become human upon birth. The fetal development stage is most accurately understood as one among other stages of human development, like pre-adolescence and late adulthood. Medical research shows that an unborn child can feel intense pain at 20 weeks gestation, if not earlier. Yet, in many states it remains legal to kill babies at and beyond this stage of gestation.

It is a proper use of government authority to protect unique, vulnerable human beings who feel pain. The Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act is an important step toward recognizing the dignity of every human life. Protecting the right to life should be a top priority of any just government. Eliminating elective abortion of human beings who feel pain is a necessary step in cultivating a culture of life in our nation. Government’s basic duty is to protect human life from bodily harm and provide justice for victims of violence. Such justice ought to extend to our unborn neighbors.

ERLC urges Congress to pass the Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. The bipartisan bill currently exists as H.R. 36 and is a tested legislative vehicle, with similar legislation already passed in at least 20 states. All current Republican leadership—Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, and House Majority Whip Steve Scalise—either co-sponsored or voted for versions of this bill in prior sessions of Congress. In a letter to pro-life leaders during the 2016 campaign, President Donald Trump vowed to sign this bill into law.
