

NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE

How the Nation's Largest and Most Effective Pro-Life Group Began

1957

A.L.I. proposes abortion law changes.

1967-1973

Several states loosen abortion laws

January 22, 1973

Roe v. Wade legalizes abortion on demand in U.S.

May 14, 1973

NRLC formally incorporated

September 1976

Hyde Amendment prohibits use of tax dollars for abortion. Supreme Court upholds policy in 1977 ruling.

1979

In *Bellotti v. Baird*, Supreme Court allows parental involvement in abortion decision

Congress bans military funded abortions

November 1980

Pro-Life President Ronald Reagan elected; 11 seats in Senate switch to pro-life side

1983

Constitutional amendment to overturn *Roe* falls just 17 votes short of needed two-thirds Senate majority

1984

Reagan institutes "Mexico City Policy" barring aid to groups promoting or performing abortions overseas

1985

U.S. withholds funds from UN Population Fund because of abortion activism

Congress protects unborn children from harmful fetal experimentation



"The greatest destroyer of peace is abortion."

— Mother Teresa

Though there is evidence of a few rogue doctors and midwives performing abortions in the U.S. as far back as the 1850s, the first concerted effort to overturn state laws prohibiting abortion began in 1957, when a group of prominent lawyers, law professors and judges, as members of the American Law Institute (ALI) first proposed a "model penal code" on abortion, calling for abortion to be legal in cases where there was "substantial risk that continuance of the pregnancy would gravely impair the physical or mental health of the woman, or that the child resulting from pregnancy would be born with grave physical or mental defect, or in cases of pregnancy resulting from rape or incest." Before states began adopting the ALI model in the late 1960s, statutes generally prohibited abortion or limited it to situations of "severe physical disease or impairment," and states interpreted these laws rather strictly.

Mississippi added an exception for rape in 1966, but the first state to specifically follow the ALI model was Colorado in April of 1967. Several other states followed suit, with North Carolina and California passing ALI style statutes in 1967 and Georgia and Maryland doing so in 1968. By 1973, thirteen states had passed laws based on or similar to the ALI model, and in many other states and Washington, D.C., court decisions had rendered previous statutes invalid or ineffective.

Several states went beyond the ALI model, allowing abortion for any reason as long as it was performed prior to fetal viability. Abortion was virtually legal on demand in Alaska, Hawaii, New York, and Washington state prior to 1973. In other states with ALI style

statutes, such as California, the maternal "mental health" exception was interpreted so broadly that abortion rates actually exceeded those of states with more liberal laws.

As efforts to liberalize abortion laws began to emerge all over the country, individuals concerned about the sanctity of life began to meet and organize. The first state group, the Virginia Society for Human Life, formed in 1967, soon followed by the formation of state groups in Minnesota, Colorado, and Illinois.

While abortion continued to be debated at the state level, representatives from state groups across the country met several times from 1968-73 to exchange ideas on lobbying and fundraising.

When the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion on demand throughout all nine months of pregnancy in all fifty states in its January 22, 1973 *Roe v.*

Wade and *Doe v. Bolton* decisions, these various state right to life groups saw the need to combine their efforts and coordinate a national response. By May 1973, thirty state groups had elected representatives to serve on a board of directors, and the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) was formally incorporated on May 14, 1973. The first NRLC convention was held in June of 1973 and NRLC opened its national office in Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1973 with six full time employees.

In the early years, different programs helped the pro-life movement grow and expand. One particularly successful campaign, Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life's "Mission Possible" project, provided other fledgling state groups with leadership training and financial assistance.



A "Grassroots" Organization

Grassroots groups are those, like NRLC, which are generated, governed, and supported from the ground up, from the local or state level, by ordinary citizens, rather than those created and backed by corporations, celebrities, or the cultural elite. NRLC began at the local level and is still governed today by representatives from all fifty states who meet quarterly to set NRLC's policies and priorities. The average contribution to NRLC is about \$30.

NRLC is listened to in Washington, D.C. and in state capitols across the U.S.A. because legislators know that we represent real people, an active and informed constituency in their home states and districts.

1988

Pro-Life President George Bush elected

1989

In 5-4 vote, Supreme Court upholds modest abortion limits in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*

1992

While upholding *Roe*, Supreme Court determines waiting periods and informed consent constitutional in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*

1992

Pro-Abortion President Bill Clinton elected

1993

Just three days into office, Clinton reverses Mexico City policy, decrees that military hospitals must offer abortions, and signs executive order calling for testing of abortifacient RU486

NRLC stuns Clinton and Democrat controlled congress by stymying passage of FOCA (Freedom of Choice Act) which would have invalidated even modest state limits on abortion.

NRLC plays key role in helping block repeal of Hyde Amendment

NRLC objections help derail Clinton Health Care Plan in Congress which would have funded abortion and rationed health care

President George W. Bush



"... our nation should set a great goal, that unborn children should be welcomed in life and

Vice President
Dick Cheney



"...life must not be treated as an object of experimentation, or as a mere commodity."

1994

Massive electoral victory for NRLC – 10 new pro-life senators, 35 new pro-life congressmen elected; nearly 30 pro-abortion congressmen lose seats, no pro-life incumbent loses in either house

June 1995

FL Rep. Charles Canady introduces legislation to ban Partial-Birth Abortion; the bill passes both houses three times from 1996-1998, but Clinton vetoes it

Nov/Dec 2000

In closest U.S. presidential election ever, pro-life votes help propel NRLC endorsed candidate George W. Bush to victory over pro-abortion candidate Al Gore.

NRLC Today

From its modest beginning in 1973, the **National Right to Life Committee** has grown into the nation's largest and most effective pro-life organization, with more than 3,000 local chapters, fifty state affiliates, a fully staffed national office, and millions of identified supporters.

Today's NRLC has the manpower and the experience to get the pro-life message out and make a difference in critical legislation affecting the lives of the unborn, the aged, and the medically dependent and disabled.

NRLC has a number of departments but three basic functions: education, legislation, and political action. The **National Right to Life Educational Trust Fund** sponsors educational advertising and develops and distributes factsheets, brochures, and booklets detailing fetal development, abortion's impact on America, and the threat of euthanasia.

The **NRL Political Action Committee** (PAC) works to support pro-life candidates.

NRLC's **Federal and State Legislative** departments work with elected representatives to pass protective legislation and to stop legislation that would further erode the rights of the unborn.

Our **Medical Ethics** department addresses threats to the elderly and disabled seen in calls for euthanasia,

assisted suicide, or health care rationing programs.

NRLC's **General Counsel** defends pro-life legislation in court and takes legal action necessary to defend the lives of vulnerable people.

Media Relations handles NRLC's contacts with the press, insuring that the pro-life message gets out promptly and accurately. It also produces a daily radio show, *Pro-Life Perspectives*, heard on radio stations all across the country.

The **NRL News** is the pro-life movement's newspaper of record, providing a monthly report of important news and upcoming educational, legislative and political events.

The **Information Technology** department, in addition to handling the day to day computer needs of NRLC, also maintains and operates our award winning website, www.nrlc.org.

Outreach works with churches, college students, and minority groups to identify their special needs and to facilitate their involvement with the pro-life cause. Our **State Organizational** department coordinates activities and events with NRLC's 3,000+ chapters and 50 state affiliates.

Our **Development** office raises the necessary funds to make it all happen.

Financial Services pays the bills, balances the books, and keeps the budget, while **Administration** coordinates and directs all the Committee's programs and activities.



NRLC's new home in Washington, DC



U.S. Congressman
Henry Hyde

"National Right to Life is the flagship of the pro-life movement."

January 2001

Bush takes office, reinstates Mexico City Policy

August 9, 2001

President Bush uses first televised speech to announce his decision not to fund research that requires killing more human embryos

August 5, 2002

Bush signs the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, which gives legal protection to children born alive following attempted abortion

Nov. 5, 2003

President Bush signs the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act

April 1, 2004

President Bush signs the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, making children in the womb separate victims if they are hurt or killed while a federal crime is being committed against the mother



Young people are some of the most dedicated advocates of the unborn

EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT

There are lots of groups with bigger budgets in Washington, D.C., but few more effective than NRLC. Who says so? *Fortune* Magazine. Even during the Clinton years, when the pro-abortion agenda marked administrative policy, *Fortune* ranked National Right to Life as one of the 25 most influential political groups in the country. *Fortune* further identified NRLC's President as one of Washington's "lobbying bargains." Others took notice as well. In 2001, *National Review* quoted one top Republican aide calling NRLC director of federal legislation "the best lobbyist in town" based on his ability to strategically pick his battles and corral votes. *National Review* found one veteran lawmaker attributing the effectiveness of NRLC's lobbyist to the fact that "He's totally honest."



NRLC federal lobbyist Doug Johnson testifies on Partial-Birth Abortion to Congress