

Right to Life News

1st Quarter 2009

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WHY WE CAN'T WAIT!

Barth E. Bracy, Executive Director

On the 16th of April, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., penned his now famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” In the letter he confronts the charge that his efforts on behalf of civil rights are “unwise and untimely.” What is important to note is that this charge was not levied against him by the opponents of the civil rights movement but by, as King describes them, “men of genuine good will.”

Our last newsletter and our annual membership letter focused on the ominous threats to life on the federal level. While continuing to defend against federal attacks on innocent human life, there are also many things that we can do right here in Rhode Island. It is eminently fitting to invoke both the spirit and the words of Dr. King in petitioning the House Leadership and other Representatives of “genuine good will” to act NOW.

For a decade we have been waiting for the Women’s Right to Know Act (WRTK) to be passed in the House as it has been passed no less than three times in the Senate. Year year after year the bill is filed in the House thanks to pro-life stalwarts. Year after year it is referred to committee. Year after year we present compelling testimony. And year after year the bill dies in committee without ever receiving a floor vote. We inevitably hear tired excuses as to how difficult it is to build consensus, and why it would have been “unwise and untimely” to send it to the floor for a vote. **For years now we have heard the word “Wait!” We are starting to wonder if this “Wait” might actually mean “Never.”**



To be perfectly clear, the WRTK Act does not make abortion illegal. Tragically, it is not possible to do so in Rhode Island while *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* remain the law of the land. What the WRTK Act does is to guarantee that a woman considering abortion will be provided with objective and unbiased information about abortion, and about the various alternatives and resources available to her should she continue her pregnancy. It mandates a 24 hour waiting period so she will have time to deliberate in light of this information.

In the nearly thirty states that have passed the WRTK Act, the abortion rate has dropped by one-third! What this means is that out of the approximately 5,000 women who abort their children each year in Rhode Island, we can reasonably expect that over 1,500 of these women would choose life if given the facts. In the case of these mothers and children, the continued failure of the House to pass the WRTK is a tragic example of the principle that *justice delayed is justice denied*.

It is time to speak loudly and clearly to the House Leadership that these mothers and these children are precisely the reason WHY WE CAN'T WAIT! We want the WRTK Act (2009 – H5334) to be given a floor vote THIS YEAR!

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find three postcards. Following the instructions on page 4, I beg you to fill them out and mail them today. Committee hearings may be scheduled at any time during the next few months. We are often given as little as 48 hours notice as to the date and time. It is immensely important that we have a large turnout for these hearings, thus I ask you to call us now to be placed on our phone tree.

On another note, I want to thank all of you who have generously responded to our *Annual Membership Appeal*. For those who have not yet been able, I would like to ask for your support in any amount whatsoever. The abortionists will not grant a stay of execution for better economic times. We need your help now more than ever to continue and intensify the battle.

And one more thing. Due to pressure from pro-lifers like yourself, pro-abortion *Attorney General Patrick Lynch* has finally released a response to our condemnation of his attack on federal guidelines protecting pro-life health care providers from discrimination. Regrettably, the Attorney General has yet to back down. To view his response and our statement pointing out what we believe to be errors in fact and in reasoning, please visit www.rirtl.org.

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The 36th Annual March for Life

From 20,000 people in 1974, the March for Life has grown to become the largest annual march in Washington, D.C. More than 300,000 people flooded our Capital on January 22 to protest the Roe and Doe Court decisions that made abortion legal throughout all nine months of pregnancy. The makeup of the March is symbolic of the movement itself. Ranging in age, in gender, and in race, the crowds united in defense of innocent human life. The number of young people is especially inspiring. Over 20,000 students gathered at the associated annual youth rally. Their commitment ensures a bright future.

Many groups and individuals from Rhode Island join the March each year. Carol Owens, Diocese of Providence Respect Life Coordinator, organized two full bus loads this year. "There were more youth and people in general than I have seen in prior years," she said. "It is inspiring to see so many people come together for the cause of human life."

Fourteen students from Providence College for Life attended. Svetlana Goretay (pictured above with other PC students), said, "This was my first March and it was a very powerful experience... Attending the March most definitely affirmed the importance of this issue and the deep need to stand for life, especially at places like universities." She hopes to encourage even more students to make the trip next year: "It is an important political action that is very accessible to us as students."

Barth E. Bracy, RIRTL Executive Director, drove to Washington with his family. "This was the first time I've attended the March. So inspiring was the determination and zeal of the young people that I hope to never miss even one March in the future!"

State House Rally

Over 150 Rhode Islanders rallied for life at the RI State House on January 27. RIRTL hosts the annual rally to promote grassroots participation in the political process and to support the pro-life efforts of our state legislators. Special guests included the Governor and members of the General Assembly. We especially thank pro-life Senators Leo Blais and William Walaska, as well as Representatives Joanne Giannini and Arthur Corvese, who stood front and center for the entire rally.

Father Bernard Healey, Government Liaison for the Diocese of Providence, led the opening prayer, and then RIRTL Board Chair Diane Manning introduced Barth E. Bracy, the new Executive Director.

"It is time to stop the horror!" Bracy thundered, opening and closing his address with moments of silence for the 50 million babies who have been legally aborted since 1973. "Common sense state legislation can limit at least some of the suffering of babies, mothers, and families while laying the groundwork for the eventual overturning of Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton." He reminded people that even when Roe and Doe are overturned, abortion will not end unless ended at the state level.

Education Coordinator Becky Miller thanked the attendees for all their hard work over the years for the cause of life. "Rhode Island has the most pro-life laws of all the New England states—that's a victory to celebrate!" she said. "But there's still so much more to do." She asked each person to take two action steps: sign up to receive RIRTL's email legislative alerts and consider starting or joining a local chapter. RIRTL intends to start at least five new chapters in 2009.

Bob Pfunder, RIRTL's first college intern, encouraged everyone to "Do one thing. You can't do everything, but you can do something. And even the smallest thing can make a difference. Take one step—you never know where it might lead you. Last year, I filled out one application, and today, I'm speaking here."

Governor Carcieri received a standing ovation for his remarks and his support for life. "We need to imbue a culture of life in this country," he said. "Abortion is the defining issue of our time." He was impressed with the number of young people at the rally and spoke directly to them. "Let me say to the young people here, you are engaged in the right issue. It's wonderful to see young people getting involved – let your voices be heard. You believe what is right for our state and our nation. Let me encourage everything you're doing. Don't give up!"

Rev. Diane Caracciolo closed in prayer, asking God to give wisdom to our leaders.



Founded in 1970, the Rhode Island State Right to Life Committee, Inc., is the only state-wide, non-profit, non-denominational pro-life organization in Rhode Island. We champion the cause of the most vulnerable members of our society by fighting euthanasia, abortion, and embryo-destroying stem cell research. We are the state affiliate of the National Right to Life Committee, and seek to work together with other groups that believe in the sanctity of human life.

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Action Alert: Pro-Abortion Bills filed in Rhode Island General Assembly

While many were preparing to celebrate life and love, abortion advocates were busy on Smith Hill. The week prior to Valentine's Day saw five pro-abortion bills filed in the General Assembly, four in the House and one in the Senate. Following is a list of the pro-abortion bills filed to date.

Recommended Action

If you live in the district of one of the sponsors or co-sponsors of these bills, please politely express to them your strong opposition. More importantly, *please photocopy and disseminate this information* to educate others in the district. People must understand that electing pro-abortion legislators to the State House results in pro-abortion laws being proposed for Rhode Island. *Let's not make the same mistakes in 2010!*

In the House

H 5423 *would prohibit the state from interfering with a woman's decision to abort her baby* prior to fetal viability, as determined by the attending physician (abortionist), or at any time if the abortion is deemed necessary by the attending physician (abortionist) to protect the life or health of the woman. Note carefully that "health" is interpreted by the courts (since Doe v. Bolton) to mean "in the light of all factors - physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age - relevant to the well-being of the patient." The bill *would also prohibit the state from restricting the method or manner of abortion*, and thus seems to pose a direct challenge to our state ban on partial birth abortion.

By: Representatives Walsh, Ajello, Handy, Segal, and A. Rice / On: 02-11-09 / Referred To: House Judiciary

H 5425 *would eviscerate Rhode Island's current parental consent law* in two ways: (a) by allowing for the consent of any adult relative instead of only a parent or guardian, (b) by permitting any internist, family care physician or psychiatrist to waive the need for any consent whatsoever, even the judicial authorization for which the law currently provides, if the girl might possibly suffer physical abuse or even only "mental injury" by seeking such consent.

By: Representatives Ajello, Ruggiero, Handy, Walsh, and Dennigan / On: 02-11-09 / Referred To: House Judiciary

H 5499 *would repeal the requirement that abortionists notify the husband prior to the abortion.* Note that while the courts have determined that Rhode Island's spousal notification law is currently unenforceable, it would potentially become enforceable upon the repeal of Roe v. Wade and should thus be retained on the books.

By: Representatives Handy, Segal, Sullivan, M. Rice, and Almeida / On: 02-12-09 / Referred To: House Judiciary

H 5500 *would require general public assistance and medical assistance benefits*, i.e. taxpayer funding, for the performance of elective abortions and abortions for victims of rape and incest.

By: Representatives Williams, Ajello, A. Rice, and Segal / On: 02-12-09 / Referred To: House Judiciary

Note: The House Judiciary Committee, to which these bills have been referred, contains at least 5 known pro-abortion members, including its Chairperson, Rep. Donald J. LALLY, Jr. (Democrat - District 33, Narragansett, North Kingstown, South Kingstown).

In the Senate

S 0087 Though filed earlier, this bill is the exact counterpart of H 5425 described above.

By: Senators Perry, Sosnowski, Pichardo, Miller, and Bates / On: 01-22-09 / Referred To: Senate Judiciary

S 0316 would provide (taxpayer) funding, under the Rite Start Program, for abortions in the case of pregnancies resulting from rape and incest, in addition to those deemed necessary to prevent the death of the mother as state law currently allows.

By: Senators Bates, Perry, Miller, Pichardo, and Sosnowski / On: 02-12-09 / Referred To: Senate Judiciary

Note: The Senate Judiciary Committee, to which these 2 bills have been referred, contains at least 2 known pro-abortion members, including its Vice Chairperson, Sen. Charles J. LEVESQUE (Democrat - District 11, Bristol, Portsmouth).

Rep. David A. SEGAL (Dem. - Dist. 2, Providence, E. Providence)

• rep-segal@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 432-7049

Rep. Anastasia P. WILLIAMS (Dem. - Dist. 9, Providence)

• rep-williams@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 272-8135

Rep. Arthur HANDY (Dem. - Dist. 18, Cranston)

• rep-handy@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 785-8996

Rep. Michael A. RICE (Dem. - Dist. 35, South Kingstown)

• rep-mrice@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 783-9602

Rep. Elizabeth M. DENNIGAN (Dem. - Dist. 62, E. Providence, Pawtucket)

• rep-dennigan@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 434-8525

Rep. Deborah L. RUGGIERO (Dem. - Dist. 74, Jamestown, Middletown)

• rep-ruggiero@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 423-0444

Sen. Juan M. PICHARDO (Dem. - Dist. 2, Providence)

• sen-pichardo@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 461-2389

Sen. Joshua MILLER (Dem. - Dist. 28, Cranston, Warwick)

• sen-miller@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 461-8689

Sen. Susan V. SOSNOWSKI (Dem. - Dist. 37, N. Shoreham, S. Kingstown)

• sen-sosnowski@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 783-7704

Rep. Edith H. AJELLO (Dem. - Dist. 3, Providence)

• rep-ajello@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 274-7078

Rep. Joseph S. ALMEIDA (Dem. - Dist. 12, Providence)

• rep-almeida@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 467-7033

Rep. Raymond J. SULLIVAN, JR. (Dem. - Dist. 29, Coventry, W. Greenwich)

• rep-sullivan@rilin.state.ri.us / 401-828-9207

Rep. Donna M. WALSH (Dem. - Dist. 36, Charlestown, New Shoreham, S. Kingstown, Westerly)

• rep-walsh@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 364-6433

Rep. Amy G. RICE (Dem. - Dist. 72, Portsmouth, Middletown, Newport)

• rep-rice@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 841-0505

Sen. Rhoda E. PERRY (Dem. - Dist. 3, Providence)

• sen-perry@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 751-7165

Sen. David E. BATES (Rep. - Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol)

• sen-bates@rilin.state.ri.us / (401) 246-1379

- Representatives Segal, Williams, Handy, Walsh, Dennigan, and A. Rice, along with Senators Pichardo, Perry, Miller, Bates, and Sosnowski earned a 100% rating from the pro-abortion Planned Parenthood PAC in 2006, while Representatives Segal, Ajello, Handy, Walsh, Dennigan, A. Rice, and Ruggiero, along with Senators Perry and Miller were endorsed by the pro-abortion NOW PAC in 2008.
- Freshman Representative Michael Rice would like to be considered a "moderate" on abortion, which, to him, presents a "complicated moral dilemma." While RIRTL does not consider any "moderate" position acceptable with respect to the taking of innocent human life, we encourage the constituents of Rep. Rice to request a clarification of his position, to ask him to withdraw his cosponsorship of H5499, and to refrain from joining the pro-abortion caucus in the future.

Action Alert: WRTK Postcard Blitz & Virtual Rally

Please set aside a few minutes and less than one dollar in postage to help us save the lives of over 1,500 babies each year in Rhode Island.

- **First**, enclosed in this newsletter are **3 pre-addressed postcards**. Please (1) write your name and return address on the front of each postcard, (2) compose a brief message on the rear of each postcard, (3) stamp each postcard with a 27¢ stamp, and (4) mail all 3 postcards ASAP.
- **Second**, please join our **virtual rally** by taking a few moments to call and email both of the following:
 - House Speaker William J. Murphy
(401) 222-2466 / rep-murphy@rilin.state.ri.us
 - Rep. Joseph M. McNamara (H.E.W. Chairperson)
(401) 941-8319 / rep-mcnamara@rilin.state.ri.us
- **Third**, please call and email your own State Representative and Senator. You can find their names and contact information online at:

<http://www.sec.state.ri.us/vic/>

Most important in your correspondence, whether written or verbal, is **your name and address, along with just a brief message** indicating your support for the Women's Right to Know Act (H5334).

If you need any help, would like more postcards, or would like to volunteer your time in this campaign, call Alison at 521-1860.

Please share this information with other pro-lifers!

Action Alert: Pro-Life Bills Filed

To date, 8 bills have been filed in the General Assembly – 6 in the House and 2 in the Senate – that merit the support of the pro-life community. These include the WOMEN'S RIGHT TO KNOW ACT (2009 -- H5334) and HEALTH CARE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE ACT (2009 -- H5076).

Please take a moment to write or email the sponsors and co-sponsors of these bills, to thank them for their good efforts. Their contact information can be found at:

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/>

Representatives Samuel A. AZZINARO, Jon D. BRIEN, Arthur J. CORVESE, John G. EDWARDS, Deborah A. FELLELA, Joanne M. GIANNINI, Karen L. MACBETH, Nicholas A. MATTIELLO, Peter G. PALUMBO, John A. SAVAGE, Gregory J. SCHADONE.

Senators Leo R. BLAIS, Marc A. COTE, Paul W. FOGARTY, Maryellen GOODWIN, Francis T. MAHER, Jr.

For updates and further information, please visit www.rirtl.org



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RIRTL's mission is to advocate for a state, nation, and world in which the innocent lives of the unborn, the disabled, the elderly, and the ill are cherished by the citizenry and protected by civil law.