



Statement from the Faith and Reproductive Leadership Institute opposing 20-week abortion ban legislation

Center for American Progress
Washington, DC
January 21, 2015

We are faith leaders from diverse traditions, committed to justice and dignity for all God's people. We believe that God entrusts each of us with the capacity to make moral decisions when faced with complex situations in our lives.

We recognize that pregnancy can present a woman with important decisions—and that she is equipped by God and conscience to determine what is best for her and her family. Any law that attempts to override a woman's conscience and personal decision-making by decreeing that she must carry a pregnancy to term—regardless of her health, life circumstances, or faith tradition—violates American values and is a form of moral violence.

Therefore, we strongly oppose a bill introduced in the House of Representatives that would outlaw abortions at 20 weeks' gestation. The bill, [H.R. 36](#), would insert politics into important medical decisions and deny a woman the ability to decide what is right for her in consultation with those she trusts the most. H.R. 36 is not based on science or medical expertise. Furthermore, it disregards a woman's human rights and her religious freedom.

We urge members of Congress to reject this legislation and instead work to provide the supports that a woman needs in order to determine her readiness and capacity to become a parent and to raise her children with dignity. Supports include measures that promote economic security, affordable housing, access to health care, a healthy environment, and personal safety.

As faith leaders, we pledge to support policies that respect women’s decision-making and honor religious freedom; ensure that all women have access to safe affordable health care, including abortion care; educate our communities about reproductive justice and engage them in work to safeguard women’s health and well-being; and stand up for women’s reproductive health as a religious and moral issue.

Signed,*

Rev. Emma Akpan
Blueprint North Carolina
Raleigh, North Carolina

Rabbi Daniel Brenner
Chief of Education and Program,
Moving Traditions
Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

Rev. Carol Burnett
Mississippi Conference, United Methodist Church
Biloxi, Mississippi

Rev. Kelli Clement
Executive Director, Minnesota Religious Coalition
for Reproductive Choice
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Rev. Charles Conkin
Associate Pastor, Central Baptist Church
Affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists
Lexington, Kentucky

Rev. Lacette Cross
Associate Minister, Covenant Baptist United
Church of Christ
Washington, D.C.

Matthew Ellis
CEO, Episcopal Health Ministries
Indianapolis, Indiana

Courtney Fowler
Conference Lay Leader, Great Plains Annual
Conference of the United Methodist Church
Manhattan, Kansas

Vernita Gutierrez
Faith and Reproductive Justice Leadership Institute
San Diego, California

Rev. Angela Herrera
Associate Minister, First Unitarian Church of
Albuquerque
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Laura M. Herrera
California Women’s Law Center
Los Angeles, California

Rev. Heather L. Johnson, Esq.
American Civil Liberties Union
Atlanta, Georgia

Rabbi Michael Namath
Program Director, Religious Action Center of
Reform Judaism
Washington, D.C.

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Todd Peters
Professor of Religious Studies, Elon University
Elon, North Carolina

Dr. Caryn D. Riswold
Professor of Religion, Gender & Women’s Studies,
Illinois College
Jacksonville, Illinois

Cherisse A. Scott
Founder and CEO, SisterReach
Memphis, Tennessee

Rev. Shannon Fleck Speidel
Disciples of Christ Minister
North Little Rock, Arkansas

*Affiliation listed for identification purposes