



July 3, 2024

Mr. Michael Whatley
Chairman
Republican National Committee
310 First Street SE
Washington, D.C. 20003

Dear Chairman Whatley,

For millions of Southern Baptists, one issue remains an essential priority for our nation's policy: the sanctity of preborn life.

As Chairman of the Republican National Committee, you share the important responsibility to develop and build an updated party platform. This document will be an informative tool for Americans as it conveys the GOP's commitments on the most pressing issues of our moment. Parties should not be shy about displaying what will guide their policymaking. In light of that, I write to you today due to disturbing reports that suggest there is an effort to remove or diminish the GOP's longstanding commitment to advancing federal protections for preborn life. This would be a grave miscalculation.

The right to life is a pre-political, self-evident right bestowed by our Creator on every individual from the moment of conception. Government is given the unique responsibility from God for protecting that most fundamental right. Citizens deserve to know where the parties stand on this matter. As it pertains to this issue, the Republican Party has been clear about the value and dignity of life for over a generation. It must not fail to do so now in this post-*Roe* moment.

Some assert the *Dobbs* Supreme Court decision left the question of abortion solely to the states. This could not be more inaccurate. While states are empowered once more to act regarding the question of abortion, the justices in no way removed the ability of the federal government to protect life. I would submit that national leadership is critical in this new era as we need leaders willing to articulate a robust vision for life where preborn lives are saved, vulnerable mothers targeted by the abortion industry are shielded from being preyed upon, and the formation of families is supported in policy and practice. To do anything short of that would signal to millions of pro-life Americans that our cause has no value, and that the promises of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are not for everyone.

Why is this so important to us? The Southern Baptist Convention is comprised of 46,000 churches and 13 million individuals, making it the nation's largest Protestant denomination.



Each of these churches holds fast to the truths revealed in Scripture, including that God knit each of us together before birth (Psalm 139:13-16), that we are all uniquely made in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), and that innocent life—whether born or preborn—deserves protection from harm. Scripture also teaches us that children are a blessing from the Lord (Psalm 127:3-5) and are uniquely special to the Lord Jesus (Matthew 18:6, 19:14).

Mr. Chairman, you have important work ahead of you. In this moment when freedom can be expanded and the equal protection of our laws can be extended to vulnerable preborn lives, the Republican Party must not step back from the cause of life. Establishing a true culture of life is what is required. Please do not waver in this crucial hour.

Respectfully,

Frederick Brent Leatherwood
President, The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
of the Southern Baptist Convention