

Speeches

Governor Mitt Romney's Remarks At The National Right To Life Convention Forum

Friday, Jun 15, 2007

As Prepared For Delivery

"Thank you Carol. We appreciate your many years of dedicated service to the cause of life.

"I was honored to accept your invitation to address the National Right to Life convention.

"I am humbled to be standing among the many who have toiled for the pro-life movement for so long, when I arrived at this place of principle only a few years ago.

"I appreciate the decades of dedication and the effective advocacy of people like Jim Bopp, the Special Adviser to my campaign on life issues.

"I know that it is not time but conviction that unites us.

"I proudly follow a long line of converts – George Herbert Walker Bush, Henry Hyde, and Ronald Reagan to name a few

"I am evidence that your work, that your relentless campaign to promote the sanctity of human life, bears fruit.

"Consider the double standard at work here, by the way. When a pro-life figure changes to pro-abortion, they get praised for their courage. But when someone becomes pro-life, the pundits go into high dudgeon.

"And so, I am humbled but also grateful to be welcomed so warmly by so many with whom I share a common dedication.

"Anyone here from the pro-life community in Massachusetts knows they were always welcome in my office when I was Governor. Together we worked arm in arm.

"I can promise you this – you will be welcomed, and we will work together, if I'm fortunate enough to be elected President.

"People often ask me how a conservative Republican such as myself could have been elected

in Massachusetts. I tell them that there were three things that helped account for my improbable victory.

"First, the state was in a fiscal crisis. A meltdown, of sorts. State government couldn't get budgets done on time. Another big tax hike looked like it was on the way. I promised to balance the budget without raising taxes. And together with the legislature, that's what we did. We eliminated a \$3 billion shortfall. And by the time I left, my surpluses had replenished the rainy-day fund to over \$2 billion.

"Second, we were in an economic crisis. Massachusetts was losing jobs every month and our citizens were afraid of losing more. I went to work to bring employers back to our state. By the end of the recession, we added 60,000 new jobs. We got our economic development act together – which explains much of the economic growth that the Commonwealth continues to experience even today.

"And third, we were in the beginnings of a cultural crisis. Social values also played a role in my campaign success. My opponent said she would sign a bill that would sanction same sex marriage. I said that I would oppose gay marriage and civil unions. My opponent favored bilingual education. I did not. I said that to be successful in America, children need to speak the language of America. And my opponent wanted to lower the age of consent for an abortion from 18 to 16 – and I did not.

"And so, social conservatives, many of them Democrats and Independents, joined fiscal conservatives to elect a Republican.

"That being said, I had no inkling that I would find myself in the center of the battlefield on virtually every major social question of our time.

"The first battle came when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, by a one vote majority, found a right to same sex marriage in our constitution. John Adams wrote that constitution. I'm sure he'd be surprised.

"The Court said that traditional marriage – the natural union of one man and one woman – 'is rooted in persistent prejudices' and 'works a deep and scarring hardship ... for no rational reason.'

"No rational reason? How about children? Isn't it clear that marriage provides the best environment for the development and nurturing of children? And isn't a child's development enhanced by having both a mother and a father?

"I believe that the Court got it wrong because it focused on the desires and perceived rights of

adults.

"The Court should have focused on the needs of children. The ideal setting for the raising of a child is a home built on a marriage between a loving mother and father.

"Then came the 'slippery slope' – not the argument but the reality.

"The implications of the marriage decision quickly went well beyond adult marriage. Efforts were made to change birth certificates by removing 'mother' and 'father' and replacing them with 'parent A' and 'parent B.' I said no to that. And parents of a child in second grade were told that their son is required to listen to the reading of a book called the 'King and the King,' about a prince who marries another prince. The school's rationale was since same sex marriage was legal, the education system should advance the idea.

"And then another slide along the slippery slope. The Catholic Church was forced to end its adoption service, which was crucial in helping the state find homes for some of our most difficult to place children. Why? Because the Church favors placements in homes with a mother and a father. Now, even religious freedom was being trumped by the new-found 'right' of gay marriage. I immediately drafted and introduced legislation to grant religious liberty protection, but the legislature wouldn't even take it up.

"When I was Governor, we took every conceivable step within the law to stop, block or slow down this unprecedented court decision.

"Our goal was to take the decision away from the Court and give it back to the people. But yesterday, the Massachusetts state legislature, at the urging of the new Democratic Governor, refused to allow the voice of the people to be heard.

"The fight is not over.

"We need to take this battle to Washington again. We need to explain the far-reaching implications of the push to dramatically change our marriage laws. Now is the time to pass a federal marriage amendment to protect marriage in all 50 states.

"In the midst of that battle, another arose. It involved cloning and embryo farming for purposes of research. I studied the subject in great depth. I have high hopes for stem cell research. But for me, a bright moral line is crossed when we create new life for the sole purpose of experimentation and destruction.

"That's why I fought to keep cloning and embryo farming illegal.

"It was during this battle that I began to focus a good deal more of my thinking on abortion.

"When I first ran for office, while I was always personally opposed to abortion, I considered whether this should be a private decision or whether it should be a societal and government decision. I concluded that I would support the law as it was in place – effectively, the pro-choice position.

"And I was wrong.

"What became clear during the cloning debate is how the harsh logic of an absolute right to abortion had cheapened the value of human life to the point that rational people saw a human embryo as nothing more than mere research material to be used, and then destroyed.

"The slippery slope was taking us to racks and racks of living human embryos, Brave New World-like, awaiting termination.

"What some see as just a clump of cells is actually a human life. Human life has identity. Human life has the capacity to love and be loved. Human life has a profound dignity, undiminished by age or infirmity.

"My experience as Governor taught me firsthand that the threat to our culture is real and those in a position to do so must take action to defend it.

"Times of decision are moments of great clarity. Before I was Governor, the life issue was just that, an issue. But when responsibility for life or ending life was placed in my hands, I made the right decision. I chose life.

"Just like some others in the pro-life movement, a moment of decision became a defining moment.

"And so, every time I faced a decision as Governor that related to life, I came down on the side of life.

"I fought to ban cloning.

"I fought to ban embryo farming.

"I fought to define life as beginning at conception rather than at the time of implantation.

"I fought for abstinence education in our schools.

"And I vetoed a so-called emergency contraception bill that gave young girls abortive drugs without prescription or parental consent.

"That is my record as Governor of Massachusetts.

"Recently, I was attacked by one of my opponents because when I ran for Governor I promised to maintain the status quo with regards to laws relating to abortion in Massachusetts. Of course, I kept that promise. But in Massachusetts, that meant vetoing pro-choice legislation – as I consistently did as Governor. That's why last month I was honored with an award from Massachusetts Citizens for Life in recognition of the actions I took as Governor to protect life.

"The next president, especially if faced with a hostile Congress, will be confronted with many legislative tests, such as challenging the Hyde amendment and advancing cloning. You can be sure that I will be bringing my gubernatorial experience – and my veto pen – with me to Washington.

"The larger problem is there are some people who believe that their pro-choice views must be imposed on everyone. More and more, the vehicle for this imposition is the courts.

"Some say that it is 'OK' for the courts to impose their personal public policy preferences on society. I am not among them.

"Make no mistake: the claimed rights of abortion-on-demand and same-sex marriage are not in the Constitution.

"But the problem of an activist bench goes beyond the issue of abortion and gay marriage that.

"Slowly but surely, the courts have taken it upon themselves to be the final arbiters of our lives. They have forgotten that the essence of democracy is the right to govern ourselves.

"Chief Justice John Roberts put it best at his confirmation hearing, when he described the role of a judge. 'Judges and Justices are servants of the law,' he said, 'not the other way around. Judges are like umpires. Umpires don't make the rules, they apply them ... and I will remember that it's my job to call balls and strikes and not to pitch or bat.'

"Now that's the type of Justice that I would appoint to the Court.

"On the tenth anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, Ronald Reagan observed that the Court's decision had not yet settled the abortion debate. It had become 'a continuing prod to the conscience of the nation.'

"More than thirty years later, that is still the case. Numerous court decisions have not settled this question, but have further divided the nation. And *Roe v. Wade* continues to work its destructive logic throughout our

society.

"This cannot continue.

"At the heart of American democracy is the principle that the most fundamental decisions should ultimately be decided by the people themselves.

"I certainly believe in treating all people with respect and dignity. You can't be a pro-life Governor in the bluest of blue states without understanding that there are heartfelt and thoughtful arguments on both sides of the question.

"It is our great task to persuade our fellow citizens of the truth of our convictions.

"Strengthening our country and our families, protecting marriage and human life and preserving for our children the true blessings of liberty; these are noble purposes. I am confident we are worthy of them.

"After all, we are a decent people who have a commitment to the worth and dignity of every person. This is ingrained in our hearts and etched in our national purpose.

"Thank you."

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