

VIRGINIA PRO-LIFE REPORT

2020 Virginia General Assembly Reflections

At the outset of the 2020 General Assembly, pro-life people were well aware that the new pro-abortion majority was going to take advantage of this circumstance and push forward a radical agenda that would threaten all of the strong pro-life laws that we have in place. That fear was totally accurate. Over a dozen bills were introduced that would have either expanded abortion access or stripped out rational pro-life laws.

Almost every day of the session there were hearings that VSHL lobbyists participated in, sometimes to defend a pro-life law and sometimes to oppose a new radical bill. Among the bills introduced were bills to remove parental consent, force state employees to perform and participate in abortions at state run facilities, including residential care and prisons, and another to require all insurers, even non-profits with ethical opposition, to pay for abortions.

Fortunately, many of those bills were set-aside for this year. They may well be brought up again in the 2021 session.

It became clear that there was a decision by the pro-abortion leadership to focus on two major efforts, both of which will have a dreadful effect on protecting unborn children and their mothers from the abortion industry.

The first was the drive to rapidly pass the pro-abortion Equal Rights Amendment, and the second was the tragic passage



Delegate Kathy Byron welcomed Mrs. Destiny Kuhlman to the GA to testify on the importance of the ultrasound law that Byron had patroned in 2012. Mrs. Kuhlman brought her son who was saved from abortion by the 24 hour waiting period and the ultrasound she saw.



Olivia Gans Turner, VSHL Pres. joined with women from around Virginia at General Assembly hearings to prevent the pro-abortion ERA.

of two bills that will rip away the “Women’s Right to Know” informed consent law.

In the opening days of the session, when chaos was still the order of the day as the new leadership attempted to get up and running, the only bill that was addressed was the vote on the ERA. After decades of successful efforts to prevent the pro-abortion ERA from passage in the Commonwealth, in 24 hours and on the same afternoon, the ERA was voted on and passed. Many legal experts from all sides, including U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg have commented that the ERA will threaten all pro-life laws if allowed to become part of the Constitution. The battle over the ERA is now with the Supreme Court.

Regarding the informed consent issue, the purpose of these laws will be to deprive women of much-needed information about their pregnancy, risks of abortion, their legal rights, facts about their unborn children, a chance to see an ultrasound before the abortion and 24 hours to reflect on the new information they have received. The result of this will be to leave women at the mercy of unscrupulous abortionists and their lies once again.

The laws that will be overturned as a result took years of work by VSHL along side many pro-life legislators to pass. The tragedy of elections was clearly on display for all

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Virginians to see. In the course of two days, the House of Delegates and Virginia Senate passed HB980 and SB733 and fulfilled their campaign commitments to Planned Parenthood and NARAL.

Sadly, although there were several pro-life bills introduced this year, none of them moved forward to passage at the end of session. We have our work cut out for us. The one hopeful turn was that there is once again one pro-life Democrat in the General Assembly. Sen. Joe Morrissey did vote to oppose the bills that will overturn Virginia's informed consent law. We need more like him.

In the end it is obvious that the new pro-abortion leaders have intended to make Virginia a place that will remain a haven for abortionists, if and when Roe v. Wade could be overturned. To that end, another bill that is still looming in the next session will be a resolution to guarantee a right to abortion under the Virginia Constitution. SJ 2 Reproductive Choice resolution, patroned by Sen. Saslaw, (D- Fairfax) was set-aside for this year but will be introduced again next year. If this passes it will make it impossible to ever pass a new law that recognizes the right to life of unborn children or prevent abortion in any way.

VSHL at the Virginia March for Life in Richmond

In February VSHL once again participated in organizing the Virginia March for Life in Richmond. Approximately 3,000 pro-lifers braved the cold rain to be seen and heard by the members of the General Assembly. The aftermath of that event clearly seemed to have made a difference on the action of the GA. After that event -- and thanks to the steady pace of calls and emails -- many of the awful bills that had been introduced were laid aside for this year.



Sen. Steven Newman, Lynchburg spoke to the March for Life rally crowd representing the pro-life members of the Senate. Senator Newman is a steadfast pro-life leader in Richmond.



Governor Northam and Attorney General Herring Continue Pushing Pro-Abortion Policies Post-Session

Gov. Ralph Northam has kept a \$3 million dollar campaign promise to Planned Parenthood. In what amounted to a slap in the face of pro-life Virginians, on Good Friday Governor Northam signed a dreadful bill that overturns the protective Women's Right to Know laws and Ultrasound law.

The new law removes every reasonable protective requirement about information that must be made available to women before they have an abortion and allows non-physicians to perform abortions. The new law no longer requires an abortionist to perform an ultrasound and give the mother a chance to see it before an abortion, nor does it require the abortionist to provide mothers with a booklet from the Virginia Department of Health that describes the

stages of fetal development, types of abortion or the risks of different types of abortion. The original law also required that women be given information about their legal rights, if they were being coerced in any way to have an abortion.

And as Americans were being told to prepare themselves for the deadliest week so far as our country deals with the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia's Attorney General Mark Herring thought it was reasonable to sign on to a letter with twenty other state Attorneys General that was sent Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn. The letter was intended to sidestep efforts by a growing number of governors to close abortion facilities in order to save precious personal protection (PPE) equipment supplies for hospital staff.

The letter claimed that abortion is essential health care, even though every abortion always kills one patient, the baby. The letter also advocated for wider use of telemedicine to distribute chemical abortion drugs, the same drugs that can cause hemorrhages, heart failure, and other life-threatening side effects for the women who take them. These same drugs can also lead to an incomplete abortion. So, as well as expanding ways to kills unborn children, Attorney General Herring doesn't seem to think the risk to women's lives matters either—as long as abortions can keep being performed in Virginia during this health crisis.

From the start of this period of shut down and stay at home directives, Gov. Northam has refused to shut down abortion facilities, even though every abortion performed wastes preciously needed PPE supplies that will be needed to save lives in hospitals around the Commonwealth.

Pro-abortion leaders in the Commonwealth may claim these actions as victories but those who will pay the price will be Virginia's mothers and their babies.



Virginia's pro-abortion leadership held a press conference in 2019 announcing plans to pass their radical abortion agenda if they gained control of the GA.

Pictured Front: Del. Ward, Gov. Northam, Sen. McClellan (patron of SB 733 this year) Back: Lt. Gov. Fairfax, Att. General Herring

Annual Delivery of Roses to Legislators on the Anniversary of Roe v. Wade

January 22, 2020 marked the 47th Anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision of Roe v. Wade made on January 22, 1973 allowing the nation-wide policy of abortion-on-demand.

Virginia Society for Human Life, following that decision, has distributed a long stem red rose to each member of the Virginia General Assembly on January 22. They were



Louise Hartz with Del. Cole



Maggie Disney with Del. Bell

first distributed on the desks of the members in the House of Delegates and Senate chambers. The roses are now distributed to the 140 members' offices.

A rose is also given to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and the Attorney General of Virginia.

Along with the rose, are a letter, and other pertinent pro-life information relevant to that session of the Virginia General Assembly.

General Assembly Pro-abortion Leaders Seek to Put a “Right to Abortion” into Virginia Constitution

The most alarming proposal introduced during the last GA session was HJ 2, a resolution about so-called “personal reproductive liberty”. This resolution is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to enshrine the right to abortion into the Constitution of Virginia.

Last year, the same resolution was introduced by Senator Boysko, D-33. This year it was carried by Senator Dick Saslaw, D-35. The resolution is similar to one passed in New York in 2019 and signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo.

The resolution was set aside during this session but most assuredly will be taken up again next year. There is a process involved in changing the Virginia Constitution. It requires that a resolution be passed in two subsequent years by the General Assembly with an election of the House of Delegates in between. The resolution must then be put before the public for a vote. That means that the resolution must be passed by the General Assembly during the 2021 session next winter and then in 2022. After that, if it has passed in both chambers twice, it will be put to the public to vote on as a ballot measure, and the following year it would have to be voted on again by the sitting General Assembly members.

The proposed resolution is as follows:

Section 18. Personal Reproductive Liberty.

That an individual's right to personal reproductive autonomy is central to the enjoyment of life and liberty and shall not be denied or infringed upon unless justified by a compelling interest of the Commonwealth and achieved by the least restrictive means.

Don't be fooled! The words used in the resolution are specifically connected to abortion. **The phrase reproductive liberty has been interpreted by the Supreme Court and international law to mean abortion.** The intention of this resolution is to make sure that if Roe v. Wade is ever overturned by the Court, abortions

will remain legal in the Commonwealth of Virginia! **It will also have a devastating effect on existing pro-life laws, including Virginia's Parental Consent law, and make it nearly impossible to pass any new, significantly life-saving pro-life laws in the future, including laws like a Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.**

Pro-life Virginians must be vigilant and become educated on this issue and oppose the ballot measure. We must also be prepared to try and regain pro-life seats in the 2021 elections for the House of Delegates. Without a pro-life majority, there we will not be able to stop this effort.



Pro-abortion Senate Majority Leader, Sen. Dick Saslaw is Chief Patron of the Abortion amendment to the Virginia Constitution.

VSHL LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER

VSHL launched our new website last year. One of the new key features of the website was the Legislative Action Center (LAC). Now when VSHL sends out an action alert, all our supporters have to do to contact their legislators is a simple process:

Click on the link

Enter their contact information

Optional Step – users can modify the text of email to the legislator

Click send

The users also have options to call the legislator with talking points from VSHL, send a pre-written tweet tagging the legislator and writing a letter-to-the-editor to a local paper about the issue.

Our supporters can also go to the LAC on our website and see all of the action items we have posted and respond to them directly as well as when we send a link.

This is a much streamlined and easier process to get our supporters to contact their legislators directly. These direct contacts from constituents are a great help to our lobbying

team. Additionally the Legislative Action Center can be used for both State and Federal legislation, statewide elected officials, regulatory bodies, and more. VSHL is working on ways to expand our supporter base so we can generate even more of these contacts.

You can check out the LAC at:

<https://vshl.org/legislative-action-center/#/>