



Volume #80, Report #199, Article #2--Friday, October 14, 2011

ANTI-ABORTION GROUP WANTS CONSTITUTION AMENDED TO GIVE RIGHTS TO FERTILIZED EMBRYOS

The Ohio faction of a national anti-abortion group submitted an initial ballot issue petition to the Attorney General Friday that if approved by voters would give rights to fertilized human eggs.

The [Personhood Ohio](#) plan drew immediate criticism from a coalition of opponents that described the ballot issue proposal as extremist.

The anti-abortion group submitted more than 2,000 signatures to the AG to start the process of putting an issue before voters that would define "person" and "men" in certain articles of the Ohio Constitution "to include every human being at every stage of biological development, including fertilization," according to [the submission](#).

Personhood Ohio Director and Zanesville family physician Dr. Patrick Johnston said in an interview the amendment would declare, "You cannot kill a human being after their life has begun. The rights that you and I have to life and liberty would apply to every pre-born child.

"We've had four decades of legal child killing in America and we've never voted on it."

The definition would be used in Article 1, Section 1 of the constitution - inalienable rights - and Article 1, Section 16 - redress of law, according to the petitioners, but Mr. Johnston said the rights therein would not be extensive.

"Rights are limited by your capacity," he said. "A lame man has a right to walk even though he doesn't have the capacity for it, so every applicable right would apply to the pre-born child. The pre-born child is alive, it's growing, it's human.

"Scientifically, without question, life begins at fertilization, so your life should be protected, your right to life should be secured through law when you begin to live."

The group said the proposed law would not affect contraception used to prevent the creation of life, human eggs prior to the beginning "of the life of a new human being," or reproductive technology or in vitro fertilization procedures that "respect the right to life of newly created human beings."

The group collected the signatures over three weeks and aim to have the amendment placed on the November 2012 ballot, Mr. Johnston said. More than a dozen other states have similar efforts underway.

Healthy Families Ohio said, however, the "radical" change would threaten the health and safety of families, increase government intrusion into the lives of private citizens and cost the state in legal fees.

The group said Personhood USA's summary of the amendment is neither fair nor truthful and called on [Attorney General Mike DeWine](#) to order the proponents to craft an accurate summary.

"This is an attempt to insert government, lawyers and courts into the lives of our families and our private health care decisions," Healthy Families Ohio spokeswoman Sandy Theis said.

"Giving legal rights to fertilized eggs has serious consequences. This amendment would impact countless laws, could prove to be enormously costly, threaten quality health care, limit life-saving medical treatment for women, and affect patient privacy. It is too extreme and costly for Ohio."

Healthy Families Ohio said the amendment would outlaw the most commonly used forms of birth control and restrict in vitro fertilization.

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