

Voices: Pro-life voting involves more than one issue

January 15, 2020

I don't know about you, but I'm tired of hearing people support a political candidate based on one issue—abortion.

I suggest three reasons why it's a problem to make abortion the one and only campaign issue.

It's dishonest

People who choose to use the term “pro-life” rather than abortion are not being honest with themselves or anyone else. If a person truly is “pro-life,” then he or she would oppose equally capital punishment, war and indiscriminate gun ownership—all pro-life issues.

I don't know of anyone in the pro-life movement who believes abortion, capital punishment and war should be eliminated and guns severely restricted. I doubt they really are pro-life.

If a person honestly wants to be pro-life, then continue advocating for eliminating abortion while also standing up against capital punishment, identifying as a conscientious objector and advocating for stricter gun control laws.

To be especially serious about pro-life, a person also should work to eliminate poverty, demand health care for everyone and work to stop climate change.

In fact, to be pro-life, the list is almost endless: drive the speed limit and follow all safety laws, speak out against the tobacco industry, seek ways to

help people fight obesity, stop posting hateful messages on social media, demand fair treatment of immigrants and people of all races.

It's dumb

One-issue political supporters essentially are saying nothing else matters: “Take us to war, eliminate Social Security, be immoral and dishonest, raise taxes and ignore every other problem. I don’t care. As long as you claim to be anti-abortion, you have my vote.”

It sounds ridiculous when put like that, but it’s precisely what has happened. We have countless officeholders with nothing to offer except a claim to be against abortion. We have politicians in place who know they are safe and can do whatever they want because they were elected for one position. They know people will vote for them regardless of anything else they do.

This includes the incumbent President of the United States.

It doesn't work

Single-issue voting simply doesn’t work. The rationale, proven over and over to be flawed, is that an anti-abortion president will create an anti-abortion Supreme Court supported by an anti-abortion Senate and House and will be able to eliminate abortion. Wouldn’t it be nice if all the right people were in place to test the theory?

From 2001 to 2007, Republicans—the ones who say eliminating abortion is their number one priority—controlled the presidency, House and Senate and had a conservative Supreme Court. During that time, they did not pass legislation to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. With executive, congressional and judicial sway in 2017 and 2018, again nothing was done to eliminate

abortion.

At this point, a single issue—abortion—voter ought to ask, “Why?”

Perhaps it’s time to apply the definition of insanity to this process: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.” It just might be insane to vote for a politician solely because he or she claims to be anti-abortion. In addition to the fact that it’s not going to eliminate abortions, it also means people keep voting for candidates who have nothing else.

After seeing what Republicans have done with their power since 2001, it’s clear they are not going to do anything about abortion. Republicans have found a fluffy toy that distracts voters whenever necessary.

Where I am on the one issue of abortion

In the same way that anti-abortion people chose the term pro-life to identify their position, the other side chose pro-choice because it always is better to be “for” something than to be “against” something. As we already have seen, being pro-life doesn’t necessarily mean a person stands for all things contributing to and strengthening life.

To be labeled pro-choice doesn’t mean a person always supports abortions. Personally, I consider myself anti-abortion and pro-choice. What I mean by that is I would not choose abortion for myself—an easy choice for me, someone who will never get pregnant—but I think others should have the choice for themselves.

In most cases, if a woman came to me for advice for herself, I would strongly encourage her to consider life and make her choice prayerfully.

In extreme circumstances, such as doctors knowing for certain the baby in her womb already is brain dead, I would be OK with abortion. I am not OK with abortion as an option in response to something as simple as forgetting to use contraception.

These are not easy choices, but I do support a woman's right to be the one to make the choice. Being pro-choice does not mean I'm pro-abortion.

I've never met anyone who goes around meeting with pregnant women just to suggest they have an abortion, though there might be a few who do. I've never heard a political candidate advocate in favor of abortions, and I never would support one who did.

The only way to eliminate abortions is the same way to eliminate wars, capital punishment, poverty, lack of healthcare, gun violence and other problems. It will only happen when all of us live in harmony and demonstrate love to one another, following Jesus—the One who shows us what it means for God to walk among us.

Terry Austin is a graduate of Wayland Baptist University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been a pastor and church consultant and is managing partner of [Austin Brothers Publishing](#). This article is adapted from Austin's [blog](#). The views expressed are those solely of the author.