

To: Public Officials and Pro-Life Leaders
From: Marjorie Dannenfelser, SBA Pro-Life America
Kellyanne Conway, KAConsulting LLC
RE: Five Steps to Winning the Abortion Debate

Earlier this cycle, we advised Republican public officials and candidates in a *Washington Post* opinion piece¹ that to win on the issue of abortion, they must go on offense. If you avoid the issue of abortion altogether, that gives pro-abortion Democrats (the real extreme actors on this issue) the opportunity to exaggerate your record or position on life and call you extreme. And the press will help them.

That includes having to accomplish the following items:

- 1) ***Demonstrate* your commitment by consistently addressing the issue – in other words, be a peacock, not an ostrich;**
- 2) ***Define* your pro-life position;**
- 3) ***Expose* the Democrats’ radical positions on this issue.**
- 4) ***Showcase* you are serving moms and saving children;**
- 5) ***Finish* the sentence and complete the sale with compassion through words, phrases, actions, and real-life examples.**

We’ll elaborate on each of these items through the lens of SBA and KAConsulting based on our experience and knowledge, including studying numerous polls on the issue of abortion.

1) *Demonstrate* your commitment by consistently addressing the issue – in other words, be a peacock, not an ostrich

- **While abortion does not emerge in polling as “the top issue”, it’s crucial to recognize its potential to escalate if mishandled or ignored by Republican and pro-life leaders.** Democrats and pro-abortion groups are poised to leverage it as a decisive factor in political messaging. However, a Republican, perceived as compassionate and advocating for a common-sense law can neutralize the issue.
- **The key lies in consistent repetition – a single speech or debate clip won’t suffice.** Republicans and pro-life communicators must be ready with concise 7-second, 70-second, and comprehensive 7-minute versions, all echoing this robust 5-point formula. Republicans and pro-life communicators should write down their position on abortion – in short, medium, and long form – memorize it, and practice it with those they trust. Define yourself early before your opponent can define you. See the example given at the end of this document.

¹ [Opinion | Kellyanne Conway, Marjorie Dannenfelser: GOP need to push on abortion - The Washington Post](#)

In the recent February 2024 NY-03 special election, Democrat Tom Suozzi could've chosen to be an ostrich on the border, hiding from his party's biggest vulnerability in 2024. Instead, he was a peacock. Suozzi paid for mailers, and ads, and did public appearances and press conferences on the border issue distancing himself from Biden- Harris and his party. This is a lesson for the Republican party on abortion, instead of being ostriches on an issue your opponent is hammering you on, combat it directly with paid ads and public appearances and show voters what it means in 2024 to be pro-life.

- In polling, a candidate who supports allowing abortion as late as the third trimester including after 34 weeks loses handily - by 4-to-1 - to a candidate who supports protecting an unborn baby who can feel pain (at 15 weeks) with exceptions and who also advocates for pro-family policies.
- Also in polling, the majority would be less likely to vote for a Congressional candidate if they were not willing to compromise or aren't able to express support for protecting babies who can feel pain (at 15-weeks).
 - *This majority holds across audiences and demographics including Suburban Women and self-ID Independents who would be less likely to vote for a candidate unwilling to compromise on this issue by meeting somewhere in the middle like 15 weeks.*

Note: the issue of weeks or gestational limits may already be settled in your state via trigger laws that took effect after Dobbs and/or hard-fought protections for life in your legislature since. This doesn't mean that you have to walk it backwards to please your constituents. Your compassion will come through your statements and how you handle #2-#5 below. You can neutralize the frenzy sewn by the media and liberals with a metered and compassionate approach, and contrasting laws to serve women and mothers with the extreme position of Democrats to legalize abortion in the 2nd and 3rd trimester.

2) Define your pro-life position

- **Flawed perceptions about Republicans and abortion have become a harsh reality.** Too many voters mistakenly think Republicans have little to no exceptions, when in fact they are more likely to agree with Republican positions on abortion than Democrats - by far. This will continue so long as Republicans look the other way or refuse to vocally and visually push back and reframe on offense.
- **Republicans must punch through this flawed perception and seemingly unlimited ad money pummeling Republicans as being extreme.** Be clear and concise in explaining what pro-life means to you and what that means for the public - public opinion (and science) are on your side. Compared to the extreme positions on the Left - abortion well after a baby is viable and late in the third trimester - the public prefers a pro-life leader who is principled in their position and stands by it while expressing compassion to serve mothers and protect the unborn.
- **Write down your position on abortion, practice saying it, and memorize it.** Practice delivering your position with your spouse and others whom you trust and tweak as necessary. The first time you verbalize your position should not be in front of a hostile media reporter.

3) **Exposing the Democrats' radical positions on this issue.**

- **Who are the extremists?** Pillars of the Democratic Party platform, on the record votes by Democrat, and blue state laws are extremely unpopular. Taxpayer-funded abortion, late-term abortions including second and third-trimester elective abortion procedures, and voting against the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, simply shock the conscience of most Americans.
- Democrat extremism on abortion needs to be widely known and repeated verbatim every time a microphone is shoved in front of a Republican's face, a lie is permitted to fly, an outrageous ad is launched, an accusation is made on TV, in a mail piece, in a debate, or in your statehouse chambers. The response must be swift, substantive, and specific.
- **Democrats are the party of:**
 - **Late-term, elective abortions.** Populous states like NY, CA, CO, and IL allow third-trimester abortions for absolutely no reason, regardless of the moral implications.
 - **Against requiring doctors to provide life-saving medical care to an infant born during a failed abortion procedure** (All but one Democrat federally voted against this bill, Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. It is likely true in your state, as well, that you can find an example when Democrats voted against a Born Alive or similar type of bill that shows their extreme position.)
 - **Repeal of the Hyde Amendment which would allow taxpayer funds to pay for abortions**, and which has been supported by many Democrat elected officials, including Joe Biden, for a number of decades. Again, in your state, it is very likely that Democrats are favorable to using taxpayer dollars to fund abortion and have had bills or amendments to do so.
 - **U.S. abortion policy akin to that of China.** The U.S. is one of 8 countries that allows, at the federal level, abortion on demand without gestational limits
 - **European countries prevent late-term abortion.** 46 out of 50 European countries either do not allow elective abortion or limit elective abortion to 15 weeks or earlier nationally.
- **At the federal level, the issue is a 15-week federal minimum standard will not only save the lives of millions of babies' lives in blue states over time and eliminate tens of thousands of late-term abortions each year, but it will also smoke out the Democrats' support for late-term, elective abortion.** Find the comparable issue in your state such as Democrats opposing Born Alive protections or voting against your prior 20-week law and hold them accountable for their insistence on third-trimester abortion. Can they meet us in the middle? What is their cut-off - 35 weeks, 30 weeks, 25

weeks? Make them name a single abortion they do not support or believe is not the wisest choice. *It also represents an overture of goodwill and a sign of compromise and compassion by the Republican Party that could provide an opening of hearts and minds to learn the truth about each political party's positions. More light, less heat.*

- **Polling has also shown opposition to positions elected Democrats have taken on abortion while in office.** The key points focused on were support for a bill promoting abortion-on-demand across the nation, approval of using tax dollars for elective abortions, and reversal from backing to opposing a 20-week abortion limit.
 - Americans are less likely to vote for this elected official after learning about each, showing the positions to be out of step with the vast majority of the voters.

4) Showcase you are serving moms and saving children

- **Connect the discussion of abortion to broader issues such as poverty, healthcare, and support for families, especially regarding adoption/foster care.** This helps position pro-life officials as those who care about the overall well-being of women and children.
- **Talk to women about the full scope of women's health,** offer them more than one option (abortion), and show how you can help them bring children into this world and succeed in life.
- **Republicans must expand the conversation beyond gestational limits, and promote the full scope of the pro-life, pro-family agenda.**
 - Streamlining adoption services and making them more accessible and affordable.
 - Making baby and toddler items like their clothing, cribs, strollers, and diapers tax-free.
 - Expanding paid maternal leave so that new mothers can have more time at home with their children.
 - Providing affordable childcare options.
- **Furthermore, the following are positions pro-life officials support and show compassion of the pro-life position that resonate with the public:**
 - *Policy makers should protect babies and serve mothers including starting child support at pregnancy, expanding child tax credits, parental leave and resources for pregnant and parenting students.*
 - *Providing information and support so it's easier for a mother to continue her pregnancy, whether they choose to parent the baby or place the child for adoption.*
 - *Americans oppose late-term abortion. Women should be offered real choices. Woman should receive resources on financial help and adoption services if they go into an abortion clinic so they can make an informed decision.*

5) **Compassion through policies, words, tone, and personal anecdotes.**

- **Emphasize that compassion knows no party lines.**
- **Tell personal stories/antidotes.** Is there a personal story you can share from your family or circle of friends? A story of a challenging pregnancy, adoption, etc.?
- **Visit a pregnancy care center and/or maternity home.** Speak to those on the front lines of empowering women facing challenging pregnancies. Hear their stories – their successes and their struggles. Share those stories with the public and post pictures on your social media platforms.
- One state Governor removed all funding for pro-life pregnancy centers and gave it to abortion providers. Maybe your Democrat Governor or your Democrat-majority legislature has done something similar. **This gives you an opportunity to contrast your compassion with the LACK of compassion the Democrats have shown through vetoes or negative votes that kill bills to serve women.** Give examples and be as concrete/clear as possible. Say "he took money away from programs that were helping pregnant women and families" instead of policy-sounding speak like "he siphoned off TANF funds from alternatives to abortion programs".
- The 90-second JD Vance debate clip (below) is a great encapsulation of going on offense: defining why he is pro-life through a personal anecdote, showcasing how he intends to serve women and save babies through specific policies, and exposing the Democrats for their radical positions, all while being relatable, compassionate, and caring in his delivery.

Senator JD Vance (R-OH) 2022 General Election Debate Clip

https://x.com/sbaproplife/status/1579626907456397317?s=51&t=0Bao2tGO2GT5gb_5nl2KtA

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO: I am pro-life. I've always been pro-life. I grew up in a poor family in a poor community. I saw a lot of young women have abortions when I was growing up. And one of the things that always struck me is it felt like a lot of those young women didn't have options. They felt like they didn't have the health care that they needed. We've got to fix that. They felt like it would have ruined to have a baby so early - it would ruin their career, their personal lives. We've got to fix that since too. I recognize of course that a lot of people are pro-choice, that they have a different view on this issue. I

was raised by a woman, the woman who saved my life. My mamma was a woman and old-school Democrat who believed that abortion should be safe, legal and rare. That's not Congressman Ryan's view. He says that he wants to codify Roe. He voted for a piece of legislation that would have overturned Roe and required abortion on demand at 40 weeks for fully elective reasons. He also voted for a piece of legislation that would have prevented doctors from providing medical care to babies who survived botched abortions. Now on the Lindsey Graham bill my view on this is, generally speaking, Ohio is going to want to have different abortion laws than California than Texas. And I think I think Ohio should have that right. But some minimum national standard is totally fine with me. We're talking about five-month-old babies, fully formed babies who can feel pain. No civilized country in the world allows elective abortion that late in pregnancy. I don't think the United States should be an exception.

Conclusion

Winning on this issue is not out of reach. If we are more compelling and consistent, if not comfortable, presenting what it means to be pro-life in 2024, if Republicans finish our sentences to ensure voters know the facts and complete the sale with voters by showing them the full scope of the pro-life, pro-family agenda with this formula, the negatives associated with the issue can be mitigated and a culture of life created.