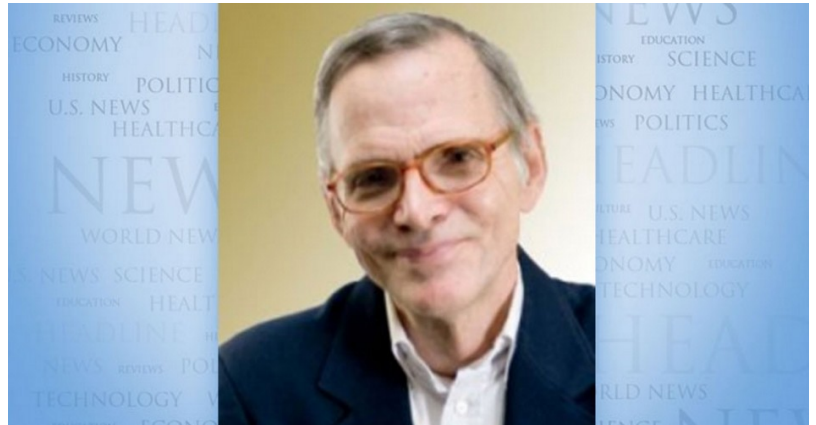




Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on August 27, 2012

Platform Chairman Waffles on “Rape Exception”

The chairman of the Republican Party’s Platform Committee said Sunday that the GOP is a “pro-life party” that takes no stand on whether there should be a “rape exception” to restrictions on abortion or abortion funding. The pro-life plank adopted by the committee made no mention of exceptions, a point host George Stephanopoulos raised on ABC’s [This Week](#) with Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, who chaired the proceedings of the Platform Committee last week.



“So is the party for a rape exception or not?” Stephanopoulos asked.

“The party didn’t make any judgment on that,” replied McDonnell. “It’s a general proposition to say we support human life. The rest of those details are up to the states and the people respectively, George, and that’s simply not covered.”

The plank, titled “The Sanctity and Dignity of Human Life,” declares “the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life that cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to unborn children.” The plank expresses the party’s opposition to funding or subsidies for health care that includes abortion coverage, as well as federal funding of embryonic stem cell research. The party also opposes “active and passive euthanasia, and assisted suicide,” the platform says.

“That’s been there for 30 years,” McDonnell said about the strong pro-life language in the platform. But the silence on the question of exceptions for rape and incest has become a hotly contested issue during the past several days, following comments made by Rep. Todd Akin, the Republican Senate candidate in Missouri. Akin said in a televised interview that instances of pregnancy resulting from cases of “legitimate rape” are rare and that when it does occur, “the punishment ought to be on the rapist and not attacking the child.”

Democrats have seized on Akin’s “legitimate rape” comment, as well as the platform language, charging the Republicans with waging a “war on women” and on “women’s health.” Republican leaders in Washington and around the country, fearing the controversy will cost the party the opportunity to defeat incumbent Democrat Claire McCaskill, have called on Akin to withdraw from the Senate race. Republican strategists consider a win in Missouri crucial to their hopes of winning control of the Senate, where Democrats now have a 53-47 majority.

“The idea that we put in our U.S. Constitution an amendment that says that women can’t get an abortion even in the case of incest and rape is way beyond the mainstream,” argued Los Angeles Mayor Antonia Villaraigosa, a Democrat appearing opposite McDonnell in the *This Week* interview.

The U.S. Constitution says nothing about rape or incest, which are crimes in every state, or about abortion, which was outlawed by more than 40 states until the Supreme Court declared it a constitutional right in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. The court did not declare a right to public



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funding, however, and starting in 1976, Congress has annually passed the Hyde Amendment, named for its original sponsor, the late Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.). The amendment to appropriations for the Department of Health and Human Services prohibits DHS from funding abortions through the Medicaid program, which subsidizes health care for people with low incomes. The ban includes exceptions for cases of rape, incest, or when a pregnancy threatens the life of the mother. Most pro-life candidates cite the same exceptions to their opposition to abortion, though some in the pro-life movement argue that no child deserves to be killed for being conceived through rape or incest.

“It’s something up to Congress and the states,” McDonnell said. “We have laws in Virginia that have some of those exceptions. But at this point, with the U.S. Supreme Court having its say, these are not issues that are even — even material at this point.”

But if the goal is to pass a human life amendment to the Constitution, how does the Supreme Court “having its say” make that issue immaterial? Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution already grants power to the Congress to make exceptions to the appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, something the “pro-life party” has not come close to doing in years when it has held a majority of the seats in Congress.

McDonnell did mention Republican support for the ban on partial birth abortions, parental notification and protecting infants born alive in attempted abortions, noting that Mitt Romney supports and Barack Obama has opposed such laws. The attack on the Republicans’ pro-life plank is “but one more attempt by the Obama administration to take the focus off jobs, the economy, taxes,” McDonnell said. “That’s what the people of America care about.”

But the American people might also care about the routine slaughter of innocent human lives if the “pro-life” party had candidates and spokesman out making the case for the right to life and launching a counter-offensive against Obama’s record as the most unabashedly pro-abortion president the nation has even known. Instead, the chairman who a week ago praised the Platform Committee for the pro-life plank made it clear that the right to life is not an issue that really “matters” in a nation that legally sanctions the deliberate planned destruction of some 4,000 innocent human lives every day.

“And really, what matters in this race, George, as everybody knows, is how we’re going to get the greatest country on earth back to work and out of debt,” McDonnell said.



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