



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on October 19, 2011

Mississippi to Consider Defining Personhood

According to U.S. News for October 14, Mississippi voters will be presented with Amendment 26 on their November ballots, an initiative redefining "personhood." U.S. News wrote: "The amendment would, if enacted, add 'The term "person" or "persons" shall include every human being from the moment of fertilization, cloning, or the functional equivalent thereof' to the state constitution."

Is it really that simple? The entire [Amendment](#) does indeed read "Should the term 'person' be defined to include every human being from the moment of fertilization, cloning, or the equivalent thereof?" with spaces for simple "yes" or "no" answers.



[Personhood Mississippi](#), a state organization, represents Mississippi in a coalition of groups across the nation dedicated to passing The Personhood Amendment, along with the American Family Association, Pro-Life Mississippi, The Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptists, Personhood USA, and many individuals opposed to abortion.

[Personhood USA](#) is a "grassroots Christian organization founded to establish personhood efforts across America to create protection for every child by love and by law. Personhood USA is committed to assisting and supporting Personhood Legislation and Constitutional Amendments and "building local pro-life organizations through raising awareness of the personhood of the pre-born." The group is based on the idea of 'personhood' — a movement working to respect the God-given right to life by recognizing all human beings as persons who are "created in the image of God" from the beginning of their biological development, without exceptions.

Founded to protect innocent human life, Personhood USA assists local communities, or states such as Mississippi, to initiate legislative and political action based on pro-life ideals. The group's stated intent is "to build the support of at least two thirds of the states in an effort to reaffirm personhood within the U.S. Constitution" without "vigilante violence."

The organization is affecting change in Wisconsin, Ohio, and other states, with recent success in Mississippi as Amendment 26 makes its way onto the November ballot. Indeed, last year, Coloradans faced a similar question in that state's [Amendment 62](#), for the second time, which was ultimately defeated, but the movement continues. Mississippians collected 130,000 signatures, 40,000 more than necessary to qualify for the Nov. 8 ballot. It has been endorsed by Mississippi Lt. Governor Phil Bryant, Attorney General Jim Hood, and both of their opponents. Some polls show an excess of 80 percent of Mississippians in support of the measure.

The idea of establishing personhood as a remedy to the abortion debate came from the opinion written



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by [Justice Harry Blackmun](#) in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. “If this suggestion of personhood is established, the appellant’s case [for decriminalized abortion], of course, collapses, for the fetus’s right to life would then be guaranteed specifically by the Amendment.”

Initiative 26 is drawing opposition from the usual suspects — the state’s chapter of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the American Civil Liberties Union. But even if the movement, which seems to be gaining traction, fails, supporters shouldn’t be discouraged. As reported by *The New American* on July 8, 2011 [Alex Newman](#) and on February 12, 2010 by [Warren Mass](#), the key to overturning *Roe V. Wade* does not require a reversal of that decision, but a different option altogether, the removal of the Court’s jurisdiction to hear such cases. An oft-misunderstood and overlooked tool in the tool chest is to understand that states, not the Supreme Court, have jurisdiction over abortion law. Though federal courts have usurped that jurisdiction in the past, Congress has the constitutional authority to limit jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and hopefully, with measures like Personhood USA, the states will begin to reclaim their Tenth Amendment rights to prohibit abortion or punish killers of the unborn.

Republican and "conservative" politicians who claim to be pro-life have consistently failed to use constitutional tools to oppose abortion. With the exception of Texas congressman and presidential hopeful Ron Paul (and perhaps one or two others, such as Georgia Rep. Paul C. Broun), these "pro-life" types repeatedly cave in. One could conclude that they either do not know the constitution, or they do not intend to keep their oaths to uphold it. On this issue, Representative Paul has introduced in every Congress since 2004 a bill called “We The People Act” (H.R.958). It would prohibit federal courts from adjudicating cases about state laws - including abortion. Personhood USA and its local efforts may be a start in reclaiming state authority over such decisions. And pro-lifers should understand the constitutional limits placed on the Supreme Court as well as the responsibilities resting on the shoulders of the several states.



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