



*Building a respect for Life
from the ground up*

Civic Basis for the Right to Life

The Right to Life is the first right enumerated in our nation's first founding document – the Declaration of Independence. The protection of each innocent human life from conception to natural death is essential to the foundation of our nation's character and well-being.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” -Declaration of Independence

“...nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws...”
-14th Amendment to the Constitution

“The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.” -Thomas Jefferson

(human life) “from its commencement to its close is protected by the Common Law.” -James Wilson, signer to the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, and original Supreme Court Justice

“Ask the Declaration of Independence and that will tell you that its authors held for self-evident truth that the right to life is the first of the unalienable rights of man [and] to secure and not to destroy [that right] governments are instituted among men.” -John Quincy Adams, America’s sixth president and son of John Adams America’s second president

“some nations have given parents the power of life and death over their children. ... [In America] we have denied the power of life and death to parents.” John Witherspoon, signer of the Declaration of Independence

Virginia’s Bill of Rights and Constitution outlined key principles that were used when writing the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Virginian law specified that physicians who gave a pregnant woman “a potion to destroy the child within her” committed “murder.”

“A child in the womb of the mother is under the protection of the law, and possesses all the privileges of a living being.” Pennsylvania Supreme Court, *Swift v. Duffield*, 5 Serg. & Rawle 38, 40 (Pa. 1819)

“a child will be considered in being, from conception to the time of its birth in all cases where it will be for the benefit of such child...” “to all intents and purposes a child, as much as if born.”

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, *Hall v. Hancock*, 32 Mass. (15 Pick.) 255, 257–58 (1834)

About a month after Ohio ratified the 14th Amendment in 1867, Ohio’s Senate select committee noted the “now ... unanimous opinion that the foetus in utero is alive from the very moment of conception...”

“My administration is dedicated to the preservation of America as a free land, and there is no cause more important for preserving that freedom than affirming the transcendent right to life of all human beings, the right without which no other rights have any meaning.”

-Ronald Reagan, Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation

“We cannot diminish the value of one category of human life – the unborn – without diminishing the value of all human life.” -Ronald Reagan, Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation

“I do not believe the promises of the Declaration of Independence are just for the strong, the independent, the healthy. They are for everyone – including unborn children.” -George W. Bush

“Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” -James 1:27

“Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.” -Proverbs 24:11