
National Right to Life Convention
Governor Tommy G. Thompson
Milwaukee, WI.
June 24, 1999

Good morning everyone. Thank you, Wanda (Franz), for that kind introduction. And thank you for your hard work on behalf of the Right to Life organization in Wisconsin and throughout America.

I'd also like to say thank you to Wisconsin Right to Life president Susanna Herro and executive director Barbara Lyons for their tireless efforts as well.

I am deeply honored to extend the welcome greeting to the 27th annual national right to life convention. And I thank you for once again choosing the Genuine American City – Milwaukee – to host your convention.

Milwaukee has so many attractions and wonderful things to do and see while you are here and our hospitality is second to none, so I encourage you to take advantage of each and every one of them.

The same can be said of the entire state of Wisconsin. There are so many exciting and innovative things taking place in our great state.

We're tops in America in the percentage of people working and the lowest unemployed in 30 years, the number of families covered by health insurance, the number of families leaving welfare for work, the SAT and ACT scores of our students, the enhancement of our environment, the low level of crime and the strength of our communities.

Plain and simple ... the people of Wisconsin are enjoying a quality of life that has no equal.

In fact, I've often heard Wisconsin referred to as "America's state" – although I have no idea who could have started that!

We take great pride in our accomplishments.

Whether it's being the nation's leader in the effort to reform welfare, the model for economic development and creating new jobs, restoring accountability in our classrooms and paving the way for real choice in our schools or preserving the sanctity of life ... Wisconsin is blazing a trail of success for America to follow.

Source: Marquette University Libraries; Tommy G. Thompson Collection; Series 2: Gubernatorial Speeches

Success is contagious. It instills a sense of purpose and provides inspiration for our people to constantly reach for even greater heights. At the very foundation of our success is a philosophy of commonsense that we put into practice each and every day in all that we do.

Since I became governor we've used that philosophy on behalf of those who can not protect themselves. And in doing so, we've become a national leader in the passage of pro-life legislation and delivering the message that life begins at conception.

In Wisconsin, a minor should receive their parent's consent before getting an abortion. It's commonsense. This is a life-altering decision and must not be taken lightly.

And it's commonsense that a woman takes time to think about the decision she's about to make. And that she is provided important information on the risks and the repercussions of having an abortion.

Wisconsin's women's right to know law is a landmark piece of legislation. And it's an important tool that provides pregnant women with pertinent information, which goes a long way toward preventing the end of a life.

Possibly no one medical procedure has generated more outrage in Wisconsin and across America than partial birth abortion. It's not commonsense to partially deliver a child then violently end its life, so Wisconsin responded by passing legislation that bans this gruesome procedure.

A partial birth abortion is not only absolutely unnecessary – it's barbaric. And I am especially pleased the federal district court has upheld our partial birth abortion ban as constitutional.

Unfortunately, we've experienced a small setback with a stay on this law and with another appeal by its opponents, but I assure you we will be there supporting the partial birth abortion ban, every step of the way.

And does it make sense to stand idly by while a pregnant woman digests alcohol and drugs, possibly causing irreversible damage or worse yet – destroying the fetus. Wisconsin doesn't stand by. I signed into law legislation that allows the court to order treatment for a pregnant woman whose addiction threatens the health of her unborn child.

That child does not have a voice, but we are speaking and working hard to ensure it has a healthy start in life. Creating a nurturing environment for our children and our families is essential to reducing unplanned pregnancies and eliminating abortions all together.

It's these commonsense efforts that are producing dramatic results in Wisconsin.

Teen abortion rates in our state have plummeted by 40 percent since 1985. In fact, since 1987, the number of abortions performed in our state has decreased 25 percent. And the downward trend continues.

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In addition, Wisconsin's teen pregnancy rates have dropped 16 percent in the last decade.

The numbers bear out the fact that we're making incredible progress, not only in protecting the unborn, but in ensuring the children of America's state are America's healthiest children.

Wisconsin was recently rated the fourth best place in the nation to raise children. Working mother magazine ranked our state in the top 10 for its availability of quality childcare for 7 years running. And we've reduced our infant mortality rates, child deaths and the number of children living in poverty.

This is a true testament to our hard work to create a healthy environment in which to raise a child, to steer women away from a decision to have an abortion and instead make a decision that will lead to a lifetime of love, protection and encouragement for a child that desperately needs them.

We've made great strides because of our strong partnership in educating women on the alternatives to abortion and the importance of taking responsibility and preserving the miracle of life.

And we must continue to work together to prevent unplanned pregnancies and support families across America.

A leader in the fight for women's rights once said, *"sweeter even than to have had the joy of caring for children of my own has it been to me to help bring about a better state of things for mothers generally, so their unborn little ones could not be willed away from them."*

In addition to the joy of caring for children, the end result of our actions and hard work can be seen in the faces and boundless enthusiasm of children each and every day.

Thank you.