

Massachusetts Citizens for Life

Mission, History, Direction

Mission

In recognition of the fact that each human life is part of a continuum from conception to natural death, the mission of Massachusetts Citizens For Life, Inc. is to promote respect for human life and defend the right to life of all human beings, born and pre-born. We will influence public policy at the local, state and national levels through comprehensive educational, legislative, political and charitable activities.

1972- Pro-abortion forces in Massachusetts have been stymied at the legislature, so they file ballot questions in local legislative districts where they think they are the strongest. Local pro-lifers in these liberal areas organized to fight the ballot questions. These organizations are in place when the Supreme Court decisions come down on January 22, 1973.

1973- The January 22 Roe v Wade and Doe v Bolton decisions by the Supreme Court make abortion legal throughout all nine months of pregnancy for any or no reason, negating all relevant state laws across the country. The next day, Massachusetts Citizens for Life incorporates.

1973- In May, already in a position to mobilize pro-life activists across the state thanks to various local pro-life committees in the cities and towns, MCFL, with guidance from Dr. Joseph Stanton, international pro-life leader, organizes the largest pro-life demonstration in New England, “Witness for the Unborn,” in Boston.

1973- The first annual MCFL Pro-life Month Dinner is organized in October.

1974- Mass. Citizens works with pro-life legislators in the State House to memorialize Congress to pass a Human Life Amendment. It also passes one of the first parental consent laws in the country, regulations for abortion facilities, an informed consent law, reporting laws on the reasons for late abortions, and requirements that abortions after 18 weeks be done in hospitals. Eventually the parental consent is somewhat watered down by the courts, which enjoin the clinic safety measures and the informed consent. The reporting requirements are not enforced.

1974 marks the release of the first issue of the MCFL News. The News quickly becomes one of the favorite sources of information available to Massachusetts pro-lifers.

In Spring, MCFL chapters in the western part of the state organize the first annual Mothers Day Dinner. The dinner has been celebrated every year since.

Also this year, pro-life lawyers associated with MCFL form the Pro-Life Legal Defense Fund. The PLLDF will play an important role in the many legal battles for life fought over the next 40 years.

1975 sees Massachusetts pro-life leader Dr. Mildred Jefferson elected as the President of the National Right to Life Committee. She brings her public relations, medical, and legislative skills to the organization, greatly enhancing its operations.

1975-The media will not take pro-life ads. They are required to take political ads by candidates, so Ellen McCormack decides to run for President of the United States. Massachusetts is one of the states which successfully fulfills FEC requirements to get her on the Democratic Ballot for President as a pro-life candidate. She was the only candidate to have a caucus in every Congressional District in the state. More than 100 Mass. Citizens Chapters across the state organize the caucuses.

1976- In July, Jim Killilea, the McCormack delegate from Massachusetts, nominates Ellen in a pro-life speech at Madison Square Garden on national prime time TV. She receives the most votes of any Democrat woman for President until Hillary Clinton.

1976- The largest ever National Right to Life Convention is held in Boston. Many facilities around the city are involved, including the Museum of Science. Pro-life leaders from around the world present, including Sir Albert Liley from New Zealand, and Dr Jerome Lejeune, who discovered the cause of Down Syndrome and the effects of inadequate folic acid in the pregnant mother's diet.

During the Convention, at Faneuil Hall, Congressman Henry Hyde announces the filing of his Hyde Amendment to end federal tax funding of abortions through Medicaid.

1977- With support from MCFL, State Representatives Charlie Doyle and Ray Flynn file the Doyle-Flynn Bill to end public funding for abortion. Summer hearings in Gardner Auditorium are packed as thousands are mobilized to support the measure.

1978- Mass. Citizens holds a Candidates Night. Every Congressional District, U S Senate, and all state Constitutional offices have top tier pro-life contenders in each party. Pro-life Edward J. King is elected Governor. Pro-lifers Silvio Conte, Edward Boland, Joseph Early, Nicholas Mavroules, Ed Markey, Tip O'Neill, Joe Moakley, Margaret Heckler and Brian Donnelly are elected to Congress. US Sen. Ed Brooke, whom Mass Citizens had targeted because of his obstruction on the Appropriations Committee, is defeated.

1979- The Federal Election Commission claims that the 1978 MCFL News special election edition is political and demands a fine and admission of wrongdoing. The Board decides to fight the case because, if the ruling stands, it will muzzle all pro-life organizations across the country. They approach Attorney Francis Fox, who has just won a similar case at the Supreme Court. Fran and his firm take the case pro-bono. Just the fees for copying documents, etc, build to more than \$100,000. Kathy Healy, President of Mass. Citizens leads the effort, which requires that the organization produce every document MCFL has ever written, and more.

1979- The legislature passes the Doyle Flynn Bill, which is signed into law by Gov. King in June with all the leaders of Mass. Citizens in attendance.

1980- In order to be able to endorse and fund candidates Massachusetts Citizens for Life establishes a Political Action Committee (PAC).

1980- Ronald Reagan wins in Massachusetts. His campaign gives Massachusetts Citizens for Life full credit. MCFL leaders are invited to all inaugural events.

1980- Massachusetts Citizens for Life establishes a Charitable Trust which allows pro-life citizens to fund pro-life education efforts with tax-deductible donations. MCFL now has the ability to adequately fund, expand, and reorganize its educational and charitable efforts.

1981- Mass. Citizens holds its first annual state convention, attracting people from across New England to hear prominent pro-life experts.

1981- The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court rules that the state is required to pay for abortions. The ruling barely references the actual arguments made by the two sides, leading to speculation of ideological motivations. At this point the federal government is not paying anything toward abortion, meaning that Massachusetts taxpayers must pay the full amount for all Medicaid abortions.

1982- Mass. Citizens gathers more than 100,000 signatures, and begins shepherding through two sessions of the legislature, a Constitutional Amendment to appear on the 1986 ballot stating that the Massachusetts Constitution does not require tax funding of abortion. This is the only way to stop the tax funding required by the Supreme Judicial Court ruling.

1982- Linda Thayer, current MCFL Vice-President for Education, joins the ongoing educational efforts. She designs several highly successful programs. Her work quickly grows to include more than 10,000 students each year.

1982- Across the state local Chapters start sponsoring TV shows on Cable Access. Mass. Citizens provides tapes. Some Chapters produce entire shows to educate the public.

1985- MCFL Chapters in the western part of the state organize an information booth at the Big E, Eastern States Exposition. More than 1 million people visit the Big E each year. This vital public education effort is repeated annually.

1986- The Supreme Court rules in favor of MCFL in the case of *FEC v. Massachusetts Citizens for Life, Inc.* This decision protects the rights of all groups to publish information about the positions of candidates and legislators.

This landmark case is taught for years in law schools and is the most important election law ruling until the *Citizens United* case in 2010.

1986- Mass. Citizens' years-long efforts to get a constitutional amendment ending required funding for abortion on the ballot succeed. Working against tremendous odds, Mass. Citizens committees in every town, personally call all the voters in the state. A voter must vote "yes" to stop abortion funding. The pro-abortion forces, with ten times as much money, pound the message that this will outlaw all abortions. The night before the election, polls show the pro-life side with 28% of the vote. We finish with 42%. The difference is the work of the volunteers in the towns.

1987- Under the guidance of Theresa Hanley, MCFL unites regional pro-life fundraising walks into a single Respect Life Walk to Aid Mothers and Children. Money raised is distributed to worthy pro-life charities across the commonwealth.

1988- MCFL initiates a statewide Media Impact Campaign. The Campaign surpasses its goal of reaching more than 1,000,000 people daily through television and radio.

1990- MCFL sends more than 40 buses, the largest group yet, to Washington DC for the January March for Life. Many participants join MCFL for its annual caucus before the March.

1990- MCFL leads a huge effort to defeat H4001, a radical and dangerous bill which seeks to enshrine abortion on demand in the Massachusetts Constitution.

Hundreds of thousands of residents are contacted by MCFL and subsequently express their opposition to legislators. The bill is defeated.

1991- MCFL gathers more than 80,000 signatures in support of new federal Title X regulations restricting government funding for abortion.

While leading this intense state-wide campaign MCFL also fights against radical pro-abortion legislation favored by Governor Weld.

In these two campaigns MCFL contacts over 500,000 voters.

1993- Thanks to a massive grassroots lobbying effort, MCFL defeats H3239, another bill which would radically expand abortion in Massachusetts.

1993- In October, more than 30,000 walk in the annual Respect Life Walk to Aid Mothers and Children, raising funds for pro-life charities and crisis pregnancy centers across the state.

1994- MCFL identifies 17,000 new pro-life voters in a statewide voter identification drive. More than 7,000 of them join the organization.

1995- MCFL plays a leading part in the defeat of H3173, one of the earliest attempts at enshrining Doctor-Prescribed Suicide in Massachusetts Law.

1996- MCFL continues mass media outreach reaching millions of television viewers with commercials designed to spread the pro-life message to the general public.

At the same time, another media effort continues with 25 local chapters now producing their own pro-life television programs.

1997- MCFL leads an *ad hoc* coalition to defeat H1543, a Doctor-Prescribed Suicide bill before the Judiciary Committee. Hundreds of pro-lifers flood public hearings. The bill goes on to defeat.

1998- The commitment to spreading the pro-life message using all available media continues when MCFL launched its first website at *www.prolife-mcfl.org*

2000- in addition to filing an amicus brief in support of a Nebraska ban on partial birth abortion, MCFL raises enough money for the MCFL Federal PAC to buy ads endorsing pro-life George W. Bush for President. The ads are heard in 38 states.

2003- MCFL and national pro-life leaders work hard in support of the Federal ban on the practice of partial-birth abortion and campaigns vigorously for the re-election of the administration responsible.

2005- Governor Mitt Romney, ostensibly “pro-choice,” vetoes a bill to increase funding for stem cell research, calling the practice of creating new embryos for experimentation “a matter of profound moral and ethical consequence.”

Later that year, the Governor returns from a vacation in New Hampshire for the express purpose of vetoing a bill requiring the distribution of abortifacient drugs to rape victims. His statement explicitly attacks the Roe v. Wade decision. In an interview he calls the bill’s assertion that life does not begin until implantation “absurd.”

Both measures are subsequently passed over his vetoes by the legislature.

2006- Governor Romney reveals in a February interview that his views on Life issues have evolved. He now considers himself to be pro-life. MCFL has been working with the governor and his staff to find common ground on life issues since his 2002 campaign.

2007- After a long and difficult fight, pro-abortion forces manage to pass an expanded “Buffer Zone” law which requires pro-life activists to be at least 35 feet away from an abortion facility. This requirement seriously infringes on free speech rights. MCFL supports all efforts in the courts to prove the law is unconstitutional.

2009- Mass. Citizens holds its first Annual Student Lobby Day at the State House.

Mass. Citizens runs an extensive series of radio ads across the state reminding voters that Obamacare will pay for abortions, cause rationing and denial of care, and slash conscience rights.

2010- MCFL makes a huge impact on the political scene in Massachusetts. MCFL PAC makes 440,000 phone calls, distributes 170,000 pieces of literature and runs radio ads reminding voters that Scott Brown will be the 41st vote against Obamacare. As a result of Brown's election on January 19th, the bill is passed without a severability clause, which may lead to its repeal.

2010- The MCFL State PAC backs a large number of winning candidates for State Representative and Senator. Their election greatly helps the pro-life balance in the House.

2011- Massachusetts Citizens for Life flags the web site *Maria Talks* which is aimed at minor girls and tells them abortion is “no big deal.” The site is funded by the state Department of Public Health and pushed in public schools. MCFL gets 70 legislators to sign a letter to the Department of Public Health which causes the funding to be withdrawn.

That Summer MCFL holds its first Pro-life Summer Academy for rising high-school students.

2012- Legislative victories at the State House!

With the support of MCFL, the legislature passes a law requiring that parents who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Spina bifida are given proper information to help them prepare for the birth.

Through the efforts of MCFL, the Joint Committee on Public Health includes language in the Massachusetts Healthcare Cost Containment Omnibus Package specifically excluding Doctor-Prescribed Suicide from the options a doctor is required to offer a patient with a terminal diagnosis.

2012- MCFL spearheads the successful effort to defeat Ballot Question 2, which would legalize doctor-prescribed suicide and threatens the elderly, disabled and infirm with death. We overcame a deficit of 68% in favor - 19% opposed and won by 49% in favor - 51% opposed, an amazing turnaround. Many members and chapters work for a full 15 months to bring about this win for life.

Following the victory, members of Mass. Citizens begin working with coalitions in other states where similar doctor-prescribed suicide bills have been filed.

2013- The Respect Life Walk to Aid Mothers and Children, refocused as a more family-friendly event strictly dedicated to raising money for worthy pro-life charities across the state. The event turns out to be a big success, raising more than 5 times more per participant than in the past.

2013- The US Supreme Court agrees to hear MCFL's challenge to the 2007 "Buffer Zone" law. Philip Moran, Esq. former MCFL President and former Chairman of the MCFL Board, and a principal on the case tells reporters that pro-lifers have a "good shot" at success.

2014- After a difficult legislative battle MCFL's intense lobbying and education efforts pay off when Rep. Kafka's Doctor-Prescribed Suicide Bill is bottled up in committee. This bill was essentially similar to the 2012 Doctor-Prescribed Suicide ballot question.

2014- The Supreme Court issues a unanimous ruling overturning the Massachusetts “Buffer Zone” Law.

The pro-abortion lobby and numerous state officials immediately vow to find some way to continue to limit free speech at abortion clinics. MCFL leads the fight against such efforts

Major Events

March for Life

Mother's Day Dinner

MCFL DC Caucus

Annual Convention

Annual Assembly for Life

Student Summer Academy

Statehouse Student
Lobby Days

Fundraising Banquet

Rose Drives

Respect Life Walk to Aid
Mothers and Children

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