LifeFacts
SOUTH DAKOTA Right to Life
Defending human life from conception to natural death
A South Dakota Right to Life Publication | Fall 2026 | www.sdRightToLife.org

A New Generation of Truth Tellers

By: Jenn Lee, SDRTL Executive Director



From the first day I accepted this position, I've asked myself: What can I bring to this role that is unique? What will I excel at, and how can I help grow the pro-life movement in South Dakota? Before joining South Dakota Right to Life, I was a worship artist. I recorded albums, spoke at conferences, taught Bible studies, and hosted a youth group in our home.

That group began when my then-middle-school-aged son and my sister, who had boys the same age, asked me to teach the kids about Jesus. I also enjoyed talking with them about cultural issues and how those issues tie into the Bible. Almost immediately, I discovered something: This next generation is going to be a force for truth—if we take the time to teach them.

I would begin our meetings with Scripture, followed by their favorite part, "Question-and-Answer Time." They could ask me anything about the Bible or culture, and I would do my best to give them a biblically grounded answer. Having received my pastoral credentials in 2021, I had spent years preparing for these questions!

I was blessed and relieved to discover that many already understood what God says about abortion, despite being, well, "Gen Z" and surrounded by social media and other influences. Most also have parents who teach them at home, bring them to church, and refuse to remain silent about important social issues.

You may have read reports about Gen Z, especially young men, returning to Christian roots and traditional values. I see evidence of it every day. I am raising three of these young men, and I regularly talk with their friends. The media often gives Gen Z a bad rap, but I see them very differently. I see a force for truth, a force to be reckoned with.

They have witnessed the destruction caused by liberal, humanistic, and atheistic thinking, and many are rejecting the lies of the enemy. They are embracing the truth about God, life, gender, and sexuality, and building a wall of fire against the enemy's onslaught. I couldn't be prouder of them!

While my generation and those before mine may, at times, have been distracted or apathetic, this younger generation is taking back what has always been rightfully theirs: the anointing and empowerment to reject the backward message that says, "We are nothing but animals. Do what thou wilt." They are replacing it with something far better: "Love God. Love your family. Sacrifice your time and comfort to serve others."

I am blessed that God has given me a gift for connecting with youth and young adults. Maybe it's because I am young at heart and unafraid to let my goofy side show in front of them! This is a serious job--but life is too short to be serious all the time. After all, the pro-life message IS a joyful message! Life is valuable, at every stage.

The summer fairs may be exhausting, but they allow me to speak with many young people. Through countless conversations across our state, I have discovered this: They have seen the rotten fruit of the pro-choice, anti-God, anti-family movement, and they want nothing to do with it. There is still much work to be done. But if you could see what I am seeing and hear what I am hearing, it would put a smile on your face.

To Gen Z: We love you. God has His hand upon you. You will carry this torch, and I have no doubt that you will carry it with passion, intelligence, and wisdom. You are exactly what the world needs right now, for such a time as this.

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South Dakota Right to Life is a non-profit, non-denominational organization whose philosophy is that all innocent human life is inviolable and is to be guaranteed protection from conception until natural death.

Life in the News

By: Fred Deutsch, NRLC Delegate



Serving on the National Right to Life board keeps me reading closely. But I never read the national news without thinking about South Dakota, a state that has stood as strong as any in the nation on protecting the unborn. Here's what I've been paying attention to, both the good and the hard.

Good News for the Unborn

Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe signed the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, guaranteeing any baby who survives an abortion attempt the same medical care as any other newborn. I carried similar legislation in Pierre, and South Dakota has had born-alive protections on the books for years. Good to see other states catching up.Wyoming's governor signed a law banning abortion once embryonic cardiac activity can be detected, and the VA reimposed a near total ban on abortions for veterans and their families. Real movement toward valuing life at its earliest stage, movement South Dakota helped pioneer as one of the first states to fully protect the unborn after Roe fell.

The Hard Truth

Here is where I have to be honest, because our movement doesn't grow by looking away from hard facts. Since Roe fell, voters in a string of red states have gone the other direction from where pro-lifers would like.

Kansas offers the clearest example. Back in 2019, years before Roe fell, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled that the state constitution protects abortion. After Roe was overturned in 2022, a ballot measure asked voters to add language stating the constitution does not protect a right to abortion, which would have overturned that ruling. Voters rejected it. Ohio enshrined abortion rights the next year, and Missouri, once one of the strictest bans in the country, saw voters undo it entirely in 2024.Why would voters who reliably elect pro-life majorities turn around and vote the opposite way? I believe most Americans, including most pro-life Americans, support protecting the unborn but draw back when they sense the law is being defined by extreme voices.

That danger exists right here in South Dakota. Our state has held the line so far, but that line depends on public trust, and trust is fragile. If our legislature ever moved toward criminalizing the women who seek abortions, sending them to prison for life, rather than going after the industry and pill pushers who profit from them, I believe we would hand our opponents the very weapon they used successfully in Kansas, Ohio, and Missouri.

At the Other Bookend

This summer also brought news from the other end of life. France's National Assembly voted to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide on a narrow majority. The French bishops called it a grave rupture in their nation's history, and I feel that in my bones.

Here at home, New York's new assisted suicide law hit its first real test. Catholic healthcare ministries won a temporary court order protecting them from being forced to refer patients toward medically assisted death. As Bishop John Barres put it, New York cannot force people of faith to answer suffering with death instead of care. South Dakota has its own statute making it a felony to advise, encourage, or assist another person's suicide, and we will work to keep it that way. A movement that only fights for the unborn while staying silent on the sick and elderly has not fully answered what a life is worth. Our pro-life movement runs from conception to natural death.

Why I Still Have Hope

We watched another nation legalize assisted suicide this summer, and abortion politics keep shifting even in states that look like ours. Those are real challenges. But a governor signed a born-alive protection. Nuns in New York won the right to keep caring for the dying on their own terms. South Dakota remains proof that a state can protect life at every stage and still keep its voters' trust, so long as we remember that trust has to be earned again every year. I have spent over forty years around South Dakota families at their most vulnerable moments. I have never once seen a life not worth protecting, born or unborn, young or old. That conviction has not changed, and neither has my hope that we keep building a culture of life, one law, one case, and one conversation at a time.

SD Right to Life Advocates for Informed Pro-Life Voters



By: Dale Bartscher, SDRTL Associate Director

On April 1, 2026, I began serving as SD Right to Life's part-time Associate Director. This leadership transition from Executive Director was made possible so that I might also run for SD House of Representatives, District 35. This places much of the work of SDRTL in the very capable hands of Jenn Lee. On June 2nd of this year I was honored to have won my Primary Race and will now go onto a General Election challenge on Tuesday, November 3. That said….

Electing pro-life legislators is critical to ending the scourge of abortion in America. The Supreme Court has returned the ability to protect unborn life to the states, so it is essential that the states are equipped with pro-life legislators to pass pro-life laws. At the same time, Congress can pass legislation at the federal level protecting life. It is vitally important that every elected official — from the school board, city council, county commissioners, state legislators, to members of Congress - **be pro-life strong**. In South Dakota:



Absentee voting begins - Friday, September 18
Voter Registration Deadline - Monday, October 19
General Election Day - Tuesday, November 3

"Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it."
- Susan B. Anthony

SD Right to Life Endorses SD's TOP Three

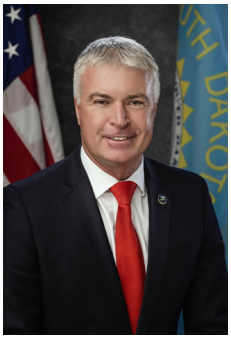
"Every election is determined by the people who show up." **- Larry J. Sabato**

GOVERNOR LARRY RHODEN: Larry Rhoden voted 100% with South Dakota Right to Life throughout his legislative career and led the fight as a prime sponsor of key pro-life legislation. As governor, Rhoden's administration has taken direct action against illegal abortion-pill operations and abortion advertising campaigns targeting South Dakota women. Rhoden maintained the Unborn Child Advocate position in the Governor's Office, keeping a dedicated pro-life voice at the highest level of state government. We are proud to endorse him for Governor of South Dakota!





US SENATOR MIKE ROUNDS: SD Right to Life is pleased to endorse Senator Mike Rounds for re-election to the U.S. Senate. Throughout his life in public service, Senator Rounds has demonstrated dedicated and effective pro-life leadership. We need strong leaders like Senator Rounds in the Senate who work tirelessly to protect the most vulnerable members of our society, including unborn children and their mothers. We look forward to continuing to work with Senator Rounds in the Senate to advance vital pro-life policies.



AG MARTY JACKLEY: Marty Jackley has been a long-time friend of SDRTL. He has demonstrated his firm support of the Sanctity of Human Life. In all of his many years of public service here in SD he has proven a firm commitment to protecting all innocents from conception to natural death. This endorsement reflects Jackley's allegiance to strengthening a culture of life throughout South Dakota, the nation and soon to be in the U.S. Congress.

SD Right to Life would encourage you to join us in researching your candidates (and the issues), question them on their values and then begin by **Voting Pro-Life Strong**!

Abolishing Abortion Requires More Than Zeal. It Needs Wisdom

Camille Pauley, President and Founder of Healing the Culture



I want abortion abolished. I believe every preborn child is a human being made in the image of God, and I believe every abortion is the unjust taking of innocent life. But precisely because the stakes are that high, the pro-life movement cannot afford strategies that feel righteous while saving no one.

The fiercest debate inside the movement today is not whether abortion should end. It is how. Some activists insist that any law short of immediate, total abolition—and any law that does not prosecute women who obtain abortions—is compromise. I disagree. That view mistakes strategy for surrender, and it risks turning people who agree on the sanctity of life into enemies.

History and scripture both teach that great moral reforms rarely arrive all at once. They come through hard, imperfect, incremental victories that save the lives within reach while preparing the ground for more. That is not cowardice. It is how durable change is built. Refusing to save some children because a law cannot yet save every child is not moral clarity; it is abandoning the children we could have protected.

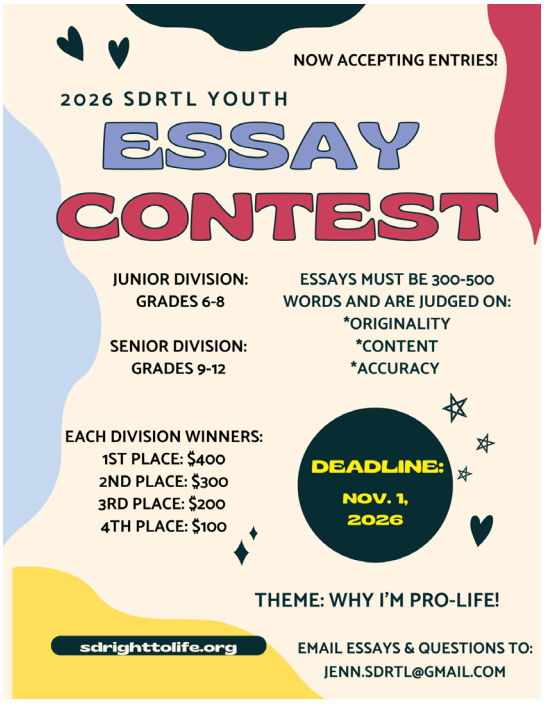
Justice also requires more than punishment. Biblical justice looks for proportionate accountability. It asks who knew what, who was coerced, who profited, who built the machinery, and who used power to prey on the vulnerable. The abortionist, the pill trafficker, and the industry should be the focus of prosecution. A frightened mother in crisis should not be treated as the enemy.

Punishing women who resort to abortion is not justice; it is moral blindness. Women grow up in a culture that tells them beauty, power, independence, career success, and wealth are the path to happiness and meaning. That message is reinforced relentlessly by media, entertainment, advertising, and profit-driven institutions. Then, when those ideals are threatened by an unexpected pregnancy, medical, educational, political, and cultural institutions present abortion as a noble, courageous, and necessary solution.

To throw women into prison under that pressure—especially when over 70% report being abandoned, deceived, and coerced—does not serve justice. It indulges the egos and anger of those who want punishment more than restoration and obscures the real targets of accountability: the abortion industry and those who profit from it.

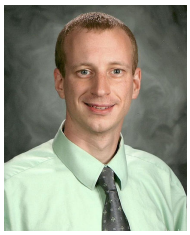
Prosecuting women creates terrible practical consequences. It will frighten women away from miscarriage care, silence requests for abortion-pill reversal, and make it harder to convict abortion providers by turning key witnesses into defendants. Politically, it hands abortion supporters the exact headline they want: that pro-lifers are eager to jail women. Meanwhile, incremental laws have saved lives in the real world, while prosecution-first bills repeatedly fail.

Passion matters. But passion without wisdom is dangerous and destructive. The path forward is clear: pass good laws that save children now, transform the culture, build real support for mothers, dismantle the abortion industry, hold profiteers accountable, and pursue enforcement rooted in restoration rather than vengeance.

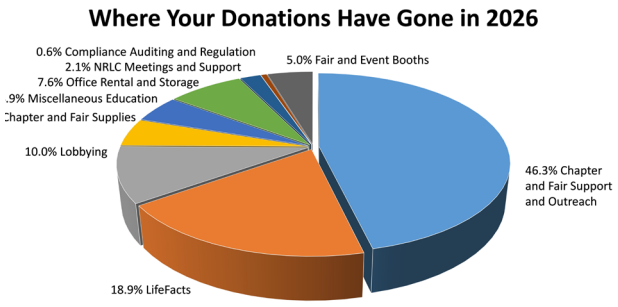


SDRTL Remains a Faithful Steward of Dollars Donated

By: Spencer Cody, SDRTL Treasurer



Now that we are more than halfway through 2026, let us take a look at how South Dakota Right to Life has worked to ensure that the most is made of every contribution and hope that you will partner or continue to partner with us as a sustaining member in 2026. So far in 2026 approximately 46.3% of your donations have gone toward providing staff in support of chapters, pro-life outreach, and coordinating exhibits and booths at fairs and other events including the convention.



Lobbying for pro-life legislation each session in Pierre has taken up another 10% of our budget. The LifeFacts that you receive goes to more than 16,000 households and makes up nearly 19% of this year's budget. Every dollar that you donate gets fully and meaningfully utilized in the most impactful way possible. Thank you so much for supporting South Dakota Right to Life!

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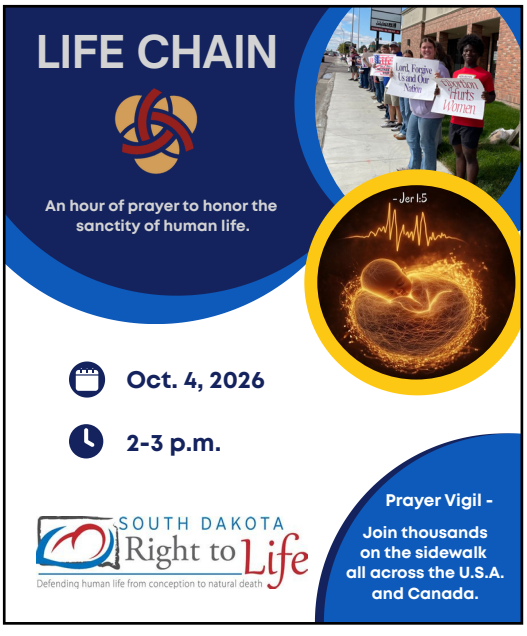

South Dakota Right to Life

2026 STATE CONVENTION

September 18-19 2026

Friday 7:00-8:30pm
Saturday 8am-4pm

LifeChange Church
Sioux Falls, SD

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Dr. George Delgado

Pioneer of Abortion Pill Reversal



Sister Deirdre Byrne

Sister, Soldier, Surgeon



Norman Woods

Executive Director of SD Family Voice

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH

Open and Free to the Public

6 pm - Doors open for Registration, Refreshments, Exhibit Hall Browsing

7 - 8:30 pm - Previews from each of our Keynote Speakers, Humanitarian of the Year Award

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH

Open to Registered Convention Guests

8 am - Doors open for Registration, Coffee, Exhibit Hall Browsing

9 am - 4 pm - Program Keynote Speakers, Youth Breakout & Lunch

YOUTH: JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL LUNCH SESSION
10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

REGISTER TODAY
www.SDRightToLife.org

LifeChange Church
6300 W. 41st St, Sioux Falls

South Dakota Right to Life

2026 STATE CONVENTION

September 18-19 2026

Friday 7:00-8:30pm
Saturday 8am-4pm

LifeChange Church
Sioux Falls, SD

Name(s) of adult attendees: _____

Mailing address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Email/Phone: _____

Registration fee: $35 - adult # of adults: _____

Young adult (18 - 22 years old) - $10 _____

Youth (7th - 12th grade) - FREE!! # of youth: _____

Total enclosed: $ _____

Register with form or at www.SDRighttoLife.org

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:
SDRTL Convention
Mail check & form to:
SDRTL
4001 W Valhalla Blvd, Ste. 101
Sioux Falls, SD 57106

Questions? Call: 605-220-8678

REGISTER TODAY
www.SDRightToLife.org

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HOUR OF REFLECTION

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH, 2027
MARCH FOR LIFE, OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL: 12PM
HOUR OF REFLECTION PROGRAM: 2-3PM IN THE CAPITOL ROTUNDA