



Office of the Archbishop

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December 20, 2011

Dear Brother Priests,

The coming year will be an important one in the ongoing effort to provide legal protection for the lives of unborn children. The state's right-to-life organization, Oklahomans For Life, will advocate for a "Personhood" statute to be enacted by the Oklahoma Legislature. The "**Personhood Act**" will affirm that "The life of each human being begins at conception." (Please note that this is **not** to be confused with the Personhood Amendment being promoted in some states which requires the vote of the people and which is strategically very problematic.)

While the U.S. Supreme Court, unfortunately, is not likely to allow a Personhood law to end the "right to abortion" contrived by the Court in the infamous 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, a Personhood statute is nonetheless important for establishing, in principle, Oklahoma's policy regarding human life. Such a statute could be used persuasively in contexts in which pro-life Oklahomans seek to protect human lives.

Oklahomans For Life has prepared a Petition as a means through which pro-life Oklahomans may urge the State Legislature to enact this Personhood statute. The Petition is attached.

I urge that each parish in the archdiocese print out the Oklahomans For Life Personhood Petition and make it available to Catholics so that all may indicate their support for the foundational principle that the unborn child is a person.

The ideal time to circulate the Petition would be the weekend of Sunday, January 22. That day is the 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the devastating *Roe v. Wade* decision. Having the Petition available to parishioners the Sunday prior to, and the one following, the *Roe v. Wade* anniversary (January 15 and 29) would be very helpful, as well, and I ask that you please do so if possible.

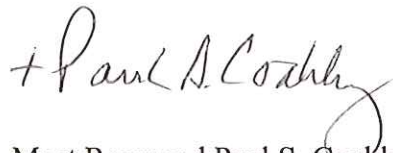
I realize that you have many things on your plate at this time. I appreciate your cooperation with this project. Please make appropriate announcements at Mass, in parish bulletins, and elsewhere, urging Catholics in the Archdiocese to sign this Petition. Please also seek volunteers at each parish to help collect signatures on the Petitions and to transmit the forms

when completed to Oklahomans For Life. Oklahomans For Life will utilize the Petitions in seeking to persuade the Oklahoma Legislature to enact the Personhood statute during the legislative session which begins February 6.

This Oklahomans For Life Petition should not be confused with any other pro-life petition that others may seek to circulate.

Most importantly, please continue to urge all Catholics to pray for an end to abortion. Ultimately, defending the sanctity of human life is a spiritual battle in which we face forces more powerful than our human efforts alone can match. We must continue to trust in the Holy Spirit to fortify and direct our efforts. With the assurance of my prayers and best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul S. Coakley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City

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## Pro-Life Petition to the Oklahoma Legislature Urging Passage of the **Personhood Act**

We urge the members of the Oklahoma Senate and House of Representatives to enact, during the 2012 session of the Oklahoma Legislature, the **Personhood Act**, which affirms that “The life of each human being begins at conception,” and that “The laws of this State shall be interpreted and construed to acknowledge on behalf of the unborn child at every stage of development, all the rights, privileges, and immunities available to other persons, citizens, and residents of this State.”

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Please return completed petitions to **Oklahomans For Life**, 3105 East Skelly Drive, Room 605,  
Tulsa, OK 74105. Thank you very much.