

NEWS

Catholic Conference does not back personhood amendment

By **ELECTA DRAPER** | The Denver Post

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The Colorado Catholic Conference said it has not endorsed a Colorado ballot measure that would grant personhood and constitutional rights to humans from the moment of conception.

The conference, which speaks for the state's three Catholic bishops, issued a statement Thursday contradicting the petitioners — Colorado for Equal Rights — which claimed Wednesday that the church's state leaders are on board.

Colorado for Equal Rights organizer Keith Mason had issued a statement listing the anti-abortion group's prominent supporters.

Mason said Pueblo Bishop Arthur Tafoya, Colorado Springs Bishop Michael Sheridan and Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput had “personally expressed their support.”

Colorado Catholic Conference Executive Director Jennifer Kraska said the statement “seriously misrepresents” the views of the Catholic bishops regarding the personhood amendment.

Mason said that Tafoya of personally told him he had signed the petition and “to keep up the good work.”

Tafoya has not signed the petition, Kraska said.

“We commend the goal of this effort to end abortion. Individual Catholics may choose to work for its passage,” Kraska said.

“At the same time, we recognize that other people committed to the sanctity of life have raised serious questions about this specific amendment’s timing and content,” she said.

Kraska said the Georgia Catholic archbishops did not support a similar human-life bill tabled by the state legislature.

The Georgia archbishops said the bill would not effectively challenge *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion.

“It’s a political, gutless position,” said Judie Brown, president of the American Life League.

“As a Catholic, it’s the most scandalous thing I’ve ever heard,” Brown said. “I can’t believe that any bishop wouldn’t want to be out in the front lines helping the petitioners. The sanctity of life is a fundamental teaching of the Catholic Church.”

The majority of Colorado for Equal Rights’ 1,000 volunteers, Mason said, are Catholics.

The dioceses also had questions about Colorado for Equal Rights’ structure, financials, strategy and tactics, Kraska said. She had requested additional information from the group, she said, that it never provided.

Mason said he did provide it and would do so again.

The Colorado effort is part of a national movement to win Supreme Court review of *Roe v. Wade*, Brown said. Montana and Mississippi also have ballot initiatives in progress for 2008; Georgia, Michigan, Ohio and Oregon were working toward a 2009 measure.

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