

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now - Paul Stark 01G6BPHKNZQ2DXCBGCKMFCQ5V4

INTERVIEWER: While there are many angry and unbelieving abortion rights supporters over today's Supreme Court decision, there are also those who are against abortion who are celebrating. Many anti-abortion activists say they've been praying for this day for years. Joining us right now is Paul Stark.

He's with the group Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life. That's an organization that's been working against legal abortion since 1968 in Minnesota. Paul, thanks for joining us.

PAUL STARK: Thank you for having me

INTERVIEWER: Where were you when you heard the news?

PAUL STARK: I was here in my office checking the Supreme Court website for the latest opinions.

INTERVIEWER: What immediately went through your mind?

PAUL STARK: I think it was relief. I'm just so happy. It's a historic decision, the Supreme Court is allowing the American people to have a say about abortion laws again and that's a monumental victory for unborn children and their mothers. It's a big step for inclusion and equality under the law.

Roe v Wade has caused so much harm over the last 50 years. More than 63 million lives have been lost, including almost 700,000 here in Minnesota and many women and men and families have been wounded as well. So today we finally move forward. We move away from *Roe v Wade* and all that harm that it has caused.

INTERVIEWER: What does this ruling mean for your work at MCCL?

PAUL STARK: Well, nothing will immediately change here in Minnesota because of a state court ruling *Doe v Gomez*. But those of us in the pro-life movement we are working to love both mother and child. We think that all human beings have human rights no matter their age or their size.

And pregnant women certainly deserve love and support in the midst of the difficult circumstances they often face. So those of us in the pro-life movement both continue to reach out to women and support them and at MCCL we'll work to advance legislation to increase protection for the unborn and support for their mothers as much as we can in this political environment.

INTERVIEWER: What does that mean exactly? What are you looking for?

PAUL STARK: Well, we've supported legislation to deal with the growing problem of mail order abortions where chemical abortion drugs are being sent to women through the mail without an in-person medical evaluation beforehand which poses certain dangers to women. And we've introduced legislation to deal with that. And we've also in recent years worked to stop taxpayer funding of abortion and stop late abortions on pain-capable unborn children. These are all common sense and reasonable measures that would increase protection for the unborn and help empower their mothers as well.

But there are obstacles to these efforts that we're pursuing. You just heard Governor Walz and he's pledged to oppose any limits on abortion even limits late in pregnancy or limits on taxpayer funding of abortion. And we think that's an extreme view, and we'll continue to work to increase protection as much as we can.

INTERVIEWER: We've been talking to those who have worked on the other side, those who are in favor of abortion rights. They say making abortion illegal won't stop abortions from happening. People are resilient. They're going to find a way. It'll only make safe abortions from happening. What's your response to that?

PAUL STARK: Well, first of all, as I said, here in Minnesota nothing is changing immediately. Abortion is still legal here for any reason unfortunately. However in response to your response to your question, we do know that laws do affect the incidence of abortion. It's not that laws can stop all abortions just like laws can't stop all other acts that they might prescribe.

But laws do make a difference in different ways. And we've seen that in other countries. We've seen that here in America. We've seen that even with incremental modest protective laws like informed-consent laws, like we have a woman's right to know law here in Minnesota. We've seen that these laws do make a difference in terms of reducing the incidence of abortion and helping women and protecting unborn children.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that this was a win for inclusion and equality under the law when we began the conversation. And I'm wondering, we were talking to a law professor a few minutes ago here on the program. Do you see moving forward the anti-abortion movement working to take this federal ruling is the ultimate goal if you're talking about inclusion and equality fetal personhood?

PAUL STARK: Well, we do think that all human beings are persons and deserve to be treated accordingly. And we're just working to advance that goal of protecting everyone.

INTERVIEWER: So you try to codify that?

PAUL STARK: We will work to, I mean, certainly we'll work in whatever ways make sense to advance protection for everyone and see that protection established under the law.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sure you know about the poll earlier this month from minnpost.com, a news website. 67% of Minnesotans asked oppose a ban on abortions in all circumstances, almost 70% of voters and 40% were Republicans. While the Supreme Court ruling is a win for those against abortion, do you face an uphill climb with the public? I'm wondering, what do you think about that?

PAUL STARK: Well, the status quo is abortion for any reason, and most Minnesotans and most Americans don't support that. Most of us oppose abortion after the first trimester, for example. Most of us oppose abortion for many different reasons and support abortion and more narrow circumstances is what polls tend to show.

But that's not what we have now. That's not what Governor Walz supports. That's not what many of our political leaders support. And those of us in the pro-life movement are going to move forward, and I think we have a lot of public sentiment on our side in terms of protecting unborn children late in pregnancy and stopping taxpayer funding of abortion. These are things where there is actually a lot of common ground and we're going to be working to move forward with those.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your plans for the upcoming few months here when it comes to the election as abortion is going to become a front and center issue.

PAUL STARK: Absolutely. Certainly, the governor's race is a big deal. Legislation one way or the other it can't really go anywhere without a governor's signature, so the stakes and the governor's race are high as well as all the state legislative races. We need lawmakers in the House and Senate and the governor who will support increased protection for the unborn, who will support these reasonable and common sense measures like ending abortion on pain capable-unborn children or ending the taxpayer funding of abortion. We need legislators who will advance those types of legislation.

INTERVIEWER: Final question here for you. I'm sure you're doing all kinds of different interviews here today. Do you plan on celebrating in some way, shape, or form?

PAUL STARK: I think we're all celebrating. It is a joyous day because the Supreme Court has reversed course on an egregious error. It was a constitutional error. It was an injustice to exclude a whole class of innocent human beings from the protection of the law. And the Supreme Court is no longer imposing that extreme policy, and that is something to celebrate absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: Paul Stark, I appreciate your time.

PAUL STARK: Thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER: Paul Stark's with the group Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life.