

Rep. Brandon Prichard
January 16, 2023
Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee
Support of HB 1173

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Representative Brandon Prichard and I represent District 8 which covers all of Emmons County, rural and suburban portions of Burleigh County, and Wilton which is located in McLean County. I am here to testify in support of HB 1173 which would create a “Right-To-Life Day” in North Dakota. The intent of the bill is to celebrate the God-given right to life on the same day Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed January 22, or the closest Sunday, as the National Sanctity of Human Life Day. Since its inception, National Sanctity of Human Life Day has unfortunately been a matter of partisan politics, as Republican Presidents have declared the holiday every year, while Democrat Presidents ignore the day. On January 22, 2021, President Donald Trump signed a proclamation to create the most recent National Sanctity of Human Life Day. President Joe Biden has not recognized the holiday.

HB 1173 would create a day of observance and celebration titled “Right-To-Life Day” in the same spirit as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. The change in the title is to (1) establish a holiday specific to North Dakota, (2) affirm the right each human person possesses to life, and (3) shorten the title and make it easier to remember. The sponsors of this bill had a productive debate on whether “Right-To-Life Day” should be celebrated on January 22, the day the Roe decision was issued, or June 24, the day the Dobbs decision was issued. While the initial decision was to celebrate the day on June 24, the sponsors of the bill eventually decided to celebrate the date on January 22, to reclaim the day as a celebration of life rather than a celebration of limiting human life.

To clarify a few points, HB 1173 would not require businesses or the state to require their employees to take the day off of work like official holidays such as Christmas Day, Labor Day, or Thanksgiving Day. Instead, the day would simply celebrate human life. Several other holidays fall in the same category, such as Juneteenth, Arbor Day, and Patriots’ Day. Additionally, HB 1173 has an emergency clause attached to it. This clause was attached when the bill was written to celebrate the day on June 24 of every year. The hope was that North Dakotans could officially celebrate the day in 2023. However, it is now clear that the legislative process will not be able to get the bill into Century Code before January 22, 2023. The emergency clause is not necessary and I will leave it to the discretion of the Judiciary Committee to keep or strike the clause.

I encourage the Judiciary Committee to support life and pass this important legislation to orientate our culture in favor of life at all stages. I respectfully ask for the committee to support HB 1173.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rep. Brandon Prichard