

## **Statement by Bishop Burbidge and Bishop Knestout on General Assembly Passage of Extreme Abortion Amendment**

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For the second straight year, the General Assembly has passed a proposed constitutional amendment that would add an extreme and deadly “fundamental right” to abortion to Virginia’s constitution. The legislature prioritized the passage of this radical amendment in a way that is truly shocking to the conscience – moving it all the way through both chambers during the opening three days of its 60-day session.

The extreme abortion amendment, which will proceed to a referendum for voters to decide later this year, would go far beyond even what *Roe v. Wade* previously allowed. It would enshrine virtually unlimited abortion at any stage of pregnancy, with no age restriction. Among numerous other problems, it would severely jeopardize Virginia’s parental consent law, health and safety standards for women, conscience protections for healthcare providers, and restrictions on taxpayer-funded abortions. Most tragically of all, the extreme abortion amendment provides no protections whatsoever for preborn children.

Parental rights and the health and well-being of minors must be defended. So too must religious liberty. No one should ever be forced to pay for or participate in an abortion. Health and safety should be enhanced, not diminished. Most importantly, human life is sacred. The lives of vulnerable mothers and their preborn children must always be welcomed, cared for, and protected.

The proposed abortion amendment will appear on a ballot later this year. So too will a measure we oppose that would repeal the one-man/one-woman marriage provision approved by Virginia voters in 2006, as well as an initiative we support to restore voting rights to all who have completed their prison sentences.

We will be deeply engaged in the work of helping to educate voters on these proposed amendments, and will fight the extreme abortion amendment with maximum determination.