

TO: SBA Pro-Life America Allies  
FR: Marjorie Dannenfelser, President  
RE: Ohio and Virginia outcomes  
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Last night's losses in Ohio and Virginia were major disappointments for the pro-life movement and serve as warning signs for the GOP – which is still severely underestimating and underinvesting in the abortion issue – heading into the critical 2024 election year.

### Ohio

**In Ohio, pro-abortion forces spent a staggering \$66.7 million – outspending pro-life forces by a 2:1 margin – to fuel a campaign centered on lies and deception to muscle through a constitutional amendment designed to allow unlimited, unregulated abortion.** Pro-abortion forces claimed without passage of the amendment, women would be left to die, despite clear language in Ohio's law allowing for life-saving care. Further, the ballot language deceived voters into thinking the amendment allows for limits on abortion after the point of viability. In reality, the vague "health" exception in its language is a major loophole that allows for late-term abortion without limit and allows the abortionist to determine viability.

Meanwhile, the in-state media ran interference for the abortion lobby, claiming the pro-life movement was lying when it rightfully asserted that passage of the amendment would allow for painful late-term abortions and eliminate parental rights, as we are now seeing in Michigan. They provided no fact-checking on the gaping lies told by the abortion lobby, such as claims that parental rights would be protected despite the ballot language making no distinction between adults and children in guaranteeing a right to abortion (and the abortion lobby's longtime opposition to parental involvement laws). "Reports" on the initiative from the media were largely commentary suited for editorial pages.

The staggering sum spent by pro-abortion forces and the tens of millions of "in-kind" contributions made by the media overwhelmed the ability of the pro-life movement and Governor DeWine to communicate the facts to the voters. In the closing weeks, pro-abortion forces outspent pro-life forces \$19 million to \$7.7 million on television – nearly a 3:1 advantage.

Pro-abortion forces are already organizing major ballot initiatives across more states in 2024. Pro-life and GOP forces must begin preparing for these fights now, most urgently raising the funds necessary to cut through the abortion lobby's lies and deception, aided significantly by their allies in the media. Under this threat, GOP leaders in these states must step up to aid these efforts, the same way Governor Mike DeWine and Senator J.D. Vance did during the final stretch in Ohio.

### Virginia

**In Virginia, Democrats used abortion to flip the House of Delegates and retain control of the Senate. According to AdImpact data obtained by SBA, abortion-focused spots made up 56% of all Democratic TV ad airings. Overall, Democrats spent \$20.7 million on abortion-**

**focused TV advertising – creating a 9:1 spending advantage when compared with GOP abortion-focused ads.**

While the GOP had a strong counter to Democratic attacks on abortion – focusing on a 15-week limit at a point when babies in the womb can feel pain, with exceptions, contrasted with Democrats’ no-limit position – they spent a relatively paltry amount (\$2.2 million) driving their message on TV.

While this is an improvement over the 2022 midterms when the GOP had no clearly defined position and was outspent 35:1 on abortion-focused advertising, it is still a significant gap that clearly made a difference in the outcome.

### **2024 Implications**

**Many in the media and in the consulting class will claim that the election outcome means the GOP must completely abandon the pro-life fight in order to win in 2024 and beyond. That is a lazy analysis that ignores the facts on the ground. The Democrats did not get that memo and will be sure to triple down in 2024, pushing their lies further and deeper.**

Abortion will be an issue in every race in 2024, so the GOP must lean in and define this issue. Moreover, the GOP already tried the “ostrich strategy” in 2022 of ignoring the issue and hoping it would go away. It didn’t work, and tonight’s results show that the issue is still salient with voters.

**It is long past due for the GOP to define where it stands on the issue nationally.** It should not be difficult: the GOP must align itself with the national consensus that already exists, which is limiting late-term abortion when the child can feel excruciating pain. Consensus protections for the unborn must also be paired with compassion and resources for women. Emerging legislation in Congress such as Senator Marco Rubio’s and Congresswoman Ashley Hinson’s “Providing for Life Act” and “Standing with Moms Act” demonstrates this compassion by providing access to tangible resources to help women who are pregnant and in need. This contrast in compassion and real support for women must be better communicated moving forward.

**The GOP should contrast this stance of clarity and compassion with the Democrats, who do not support a single limit on abortion, celebrate abortion, and have long moved past the “pro-choice” position.** Most Democratic Party elites only believe in one choice in a difficult situation, and that leaves no choice at all. The abortion industry pushes abortion on women; the pro-life movement cares for them. Their no-limits, uncompassionate position is deeply unpopular with the American people – our side must drive this contrast and communicate it to the voters.

**What yesterday’s election in Virginia also shows is that having a clear position and contrasting it isn’t enough – campaigns and the party must put real advertising dollars behind it, going toe-to-toe with the Democrats.** Otherwise, the message is drowned out in deceptions and lies.

In the wake of *Dobbs*, 25 states have enacted life-saving laws. Similar to the battle to overturn *Roe*, this is a marathon – not a sprint. The Ohio and Virginia elections are a setback for the pro-life movement and the GOP – but they offer critical lessons and a pathway forward in 2024.