

# Iowa 'Life Amendment' takes first step

An effort to amend the Iowa Constitution on abortion passed its first hurdle today.

A subcommittee of the Iowa Senate State Government Committee met Wednesday, Feb. 6, to consider an amendment that clarifies Iowa's Constitution contains no "right to abortion" and nothing that requires Iowa taxpayers to fund abortion.

The effort, designated as SJR 9 and commonly known as the "Life Amendment," was sponsored by State Sen. Jake Chapman and currently has wide support in Iowa's Republican-majority State Senate.

After hearing testimony both opposed and in favor of the amendment, including support from The FAMiLY LEADER and Iowa's Coalition of Pro-Life Leaders, the subcommittee recommended by a vote of 2-1 that SJR 9 be considered by the full committee. Republican Sens. Chapman and Roby Smith voted in favor of the amendment, while Democrat Sen. Claire Celsi voted against.

The amendment effort follows a controversial June 2018 decision by the Iowa State Supreme Court that declared abortion a "fundamental right" under the Iowa Constitution. That same decision was then cited last month by a Polk County judge to overturn Iowa's Heartbeat Law.

"Of course, no such right can be found in the Iowa Constitution itself," said Drew Zahn, director of communications for The FAMiLY LEADER. "The Iowa State Supreme Court virtually admitted as much when it claimed it was 'freed ... from the private views of the Constitution's founders' to rule on 'current prevailing [and] evolving standards' instead."

[\*\*Get the facts on the Iowa Supreme Court ruling and why an amendment is needed by clicking here!\*\*](#)

“This amendment’s language clarifies what is already obvious on a clear reading of the Constitution. There is no ‘right to abortion’ in our Constitution,” explained Chuck Hurley, vice president and chief counsel for The FAMiLY LEADER. “And there is nothing in our Constitution that forces taxpayers to fund abortion.

“But without this amendment, Iowa’s Supreme Court has already shown that it’s willing to just make up rulings on abortion and call them constitutional. That’s wrong,” Hurley continued. “Judges shouldn’t be making up laws on abortion. Whether Iowa is going to be pro-life or the next New York should be up to We the People, not unelected judges.”

Should the amendment pass through both Iowa House and Senate in the next two years, it would have to be passed *again* by the newly elected Legislature after the 2020 election. Only then would it be brought before a vote of the people for ratification. The amendment does *not* require the signature of Iowa’s governor.

To be clear, the amendment’s passage wouldn’t immediately change abortion laws or restrictions in Iowa. But the amendment would serve as a “We the People” check and balance against the State Supreme Court’s attempts to erase abortion laws by judicial fiat.

In recent years, the people of Tennessee, West Virginia, and Alabama have added similar amendments to their state constitutions.

[\*\*Want to know what was said at the subcommittee? Check out TFL’s Twitter feed to review live coverage of the public testimony!\*\*](#)

[\*\*Watch KCCI’s coverage of the hearing, including an interview\*\*](#)

with TFL's Chuck Hurley.