Frustrated with their inability to defend the indefensible and feeling threatened by various states’ new pro-life legislation, abortion supporters are increasingly foregoing traditional means of handling disagreement in a civilized society and are turning to violence. Pro-lifers have noted a wave of criminal incidents this year across the United States, as well as in Canada and Europe, as abortion supporters give up trying to intellectually justify the murder of innocent children and instead physically attack pro-lifers.

Life Legal is currently representing 85-year-old Ron K., who was knocked down and savagely kicked by a young male assailant outside a San Francisco Planned Parenthood in March. Earlier that week, the same man shoved Ron and another elderly pro-lifer to the ground and threw their table of literature into the street. When the perpetrator returned and tried to steal Ron’s banner, Ron put the banner pole through the assailant’s bike wheel spokes to stop his getaway. The man then shoved Ron onto the sidewalk and threatened him, saying, “Stay down, old man,” but Ron tenaciously held onto his banner. The man viciously and repeatedly kicked Ron. Although we have identified and located the suspect, San Francisco police have as yet failed to apprehend him. At this time, Life Legal is preparing to file a civil lawsuit against the perpetrator.

The attack on Ron is not an anomaly. After Ryan Roberts explained to a passing driver why he was sidewalk counseling outside Whole Woman’s Health in Fort Worth, Texas, the driver asked him, “Do you want to die? You and your whole family?” Ryan backed away and called out, “Jesus loves you, sir,” as the man drove off. The man then leapt from his truck and viciously punched Ryan in the face multiple times, leaving him with blood gushing from his nose and forehead. The suddenness and brutality of the attack shocked Ryan—still, he was not completely surprised. “I knew that was going to happen eventually. I told myself if that happened I was going to take it. Like Jesus. And I did.” Police identified the attacker and reported that he would
be charged with a hate crime. Ryan notes that, shortly before the attack, a mother came out of the clinic and told him that she had changed her mind. She was not going to abort her baby. Sidewalk counselors save lives and abortion supporters can’t stand it!

Donna Durning has been sidewalk counseling outside EMW Women’s Surgical Center in Louisville, Kentucky, for twenty-three years. One morning in April when Donna offered information on abortion alternatives to a woman leaving the clinic, the woman grabbed her and threw her to the ground. “I had a little card from Little Way Crisis Pregnancy Center, and I just offered it to her. And I said, ‘Honey, if you need to talk to anybody, there’s a number on here.’” Donna, 82, was hospitalized with a broken femur and a head injury, but is undeterred from her life-saving work: “I’ll be back on the sidewalk!” Her assailant has been charged with a felony assault.

Life Legal is also involved in the case of an 18-year-old student who was assaulted as she prayed outside an abortion clinic in Baltimore. A man saw her pro-life sign as he drove by and pulled over in front of her. He ripped the sign out of her hand and hit her with it. The assailant then got back in his car, revved his engine, and nearly ran over two other pro-lifers as he drove off. Local police have identified the suspect and are arranging a “deal” whereby he will not have to serve jail time. We are contemplating a civil action where we will not have to serve jail time. We are contemplating a civil action in this case.

Even those simply praying across the street from a clinic are a threat to abortion supporters. A six-foot man dressed as a woman pulled over at a 40 Days for Life vigil in Manchester, England and began to hurl the pro-lifers’ chairs and signs into the street as he snatched their leaflets away. “You people f***ing disgust me,” he screamed. All three 40 Days for Life participants at the Marie Stopes abortion facility were in their 70’s. Thinking quickly, gutsy Aileen Power, 75, tried to take the assailant’s key from his car while another team member called the police, but the man was able to drive away. He then collided with a parked car. A group of young abortion supporters on the scene witnessed the incident, but did nothing to stop the attack. Prolife advocate Tom Gill said he had “never seen anything like that” in his experience as a sidewalk counselor. Police identified the assailant and asked him to come in for an interview.

College students, in particular, feel entitled to be spared from the facts about abortion. A female student approached

In Toronto, Canada, a pro-abortion crowd cheered as a man dropped his pants and exposed himself to two pro-life women, Michelle and Samia, after following them while blowing on a recorder and an air horn to drown out their life-affirming message. The two ladies had been holding their own event to discuss abortion with passersby and had frustrated the abortion supporters. As one pro-abort admitted, “They are so well trained, it is so hard to have a logical conversation with these people. The best strategy I learned today was to disrupt. Stand in front of their signs. Take up their space so they can’t spread their disinformation. Make noise.” In other words, pro-aborts have no rational arguments against the indiscriminate killing of unborn babies, so they have to resort to violence. Because this incident happened in Canada, it is likely that no legal action will be taken against the pro-abortion aggressor.

A glimpse into the mindset of abortion supporters toward pro-lifers was revealed at a #StoptheBans rally in Columbus, Ohio. A pro-abort accused a member of the pro-life organization Created Equal of standing with the “violent” side in the abortion debate, yet minutes later said, “I think that pro-lifers who stand between patients and their doctors deserve something… They deserve to be shot.”

Abortion is violent. Its defenders believe violence is a solution to their problems. As the abortion debate heats up and we approach the possible reversal of Roe v. Wade, we shouldn’t be surprised to see more abuse directed at those who speak up on behalf of the innocent victims of abortion. May God continue to protect the thousands of unsung pro-life heroes as they work to protect the most vulnerable among us.

It is difficult to imagine someone yelling obscenities at and assaulting another individual for showing photographs of starving children or abused animals. Abortion is violent. Its defenders believe violence is a solution to their problems.

Created Equal staff at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and asked, “Did y’all put these up?” about their signs that show aborted babies. When Austin Beigel confirmed that he did, she flew at him, punched him in the face multiple times, hit him in the stomach, and yelled, “F***ing terrible person!” She has been charged with assault.

Note that this type of violent reaction is unique to pro-life imagery. It is difficult to imagine someone yelling obscenities at and assaulting another individual for showing photographs of starving children or abused animals.
Ron K. (San Francisco)—40 Days leader Ron K. was brutally attacked outside a Planned Parenthood in San Francisco. Life Legal learned that the assailant is a known activist in San Francisco, but so far SFPD has not taken steps to apprehend him. Life Legal is preparing to file a civil lawsuit against the assailant.

Planned Parenthood v. Daleiden et al. (Calif.)—In January 2016, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and a number of PP affiliates sued David Daleiden and several of his fellow investigators in federal court, for the express purpose of punishing them for their investigative work exposing PP’s role in the sale of baby parts. After two years of written discovery, depositions, and expert witness discovery, both sides have filed motions for summary judgment, to be heard on July 17. The case is set for trial on September 30, 2019.

California v. Daleiden and Merritt (Calif.)—California Attorney General Xavier Becerra charged Daleiden and his Center for Medical Progress colleague Sandra Merritt with fourteen counts of felony eavesdropping and one count of conspiracy to eavesdrop. Preliminary hearing is set for September 3, 2019 in San Francisco Superior Court.

Ahn v. Hestrin (Calif.)—Proponents of physician-assisted suicide, unsuccessful for twenty years in passing legislation during regular sessions, took advantage of an abbreviated review process in an extraordinary legislative session called to address Medi-Cal funding shortfalls to push through passage of the End of Life Option Act. Life Legal filed a challenge in June 2016 on behalf of six doctors and the American Academy of Medical Ethics asserting that the Act was passed in violation of California’s constitution and that the Act removes crucial legal protections from sick and vulnerable patients that are enjoyed by other Californians. On May 25, 2018, Judge Daniel Ottolia ruled in favor of Life Legal and struck down the End of Life Option Act as unconstitutional. Attorney General Xavier Becerra and the George Soros-funded pro-suicide group “Compassion and Choices” appealed and were granted a stay temporarily reinstating the Act. California’s Fourth District Court of Appeals found that Life Legal’s plaintiffs lack standing, and the California Supreme Court denied Life Legal’s petition for review. The case now returns to the trial court to determine whether the plaintiffs can allege sufficient new facts to establish their standing to challenge the law.

Alabama Department of Public Health (Ala.)—Life Legal sent a complaint and demand letter to the Alabama Department of Public Health (“ADPH”) seeking revocation of the abortion license ADPH issued to Planned Parenthood Birmingham after multiple violations of state and federal law were reported. We also demanded regular and consistent inspections of all abortion clinics in the state of Alabama and to ensure correction of any deficiencies reported by the ADPH.

Box v. Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky (PPINK)—Life Legal filed an amicus brief in support of an Indiana statute that requires an ultrasound as part of informed consent at least 18 hours before an abortion. Prior to the statute, PPINK, which commits 99.7% of the state’s abortions, would schedule abortions immediately following ultrasounds without giving women a chance to reflect on what they had seen. The lower court granted PPINK’s motion for preliminary injunction and the Seventh Circuit affirmed. Life Legal filed the brief on behalf of the Justice Foundation and Operation Outcry, which represents thousands of women hurt by abortion. We hope the Supreme Court will consider the case for review next term.

United States v. Haag (Washington, D.C.)—Red Rose Rescuer was convicted of trespassing at an abortion clinic. Her case, based on the necessity defense, is on appeal.
In the 1980’s, Colonel Ron Maxson and a large group of faithful pro-life advocates started keeping vigil outside abortion facilities in their communities. They prayed with mothers entering the mills and interceded for the smallest, most innocent victims of abortion. They were peaceful and respectful, but they were not afraid to speak out against the abortion holocaust. Ron and other pro-life rescuers came under attack by pro-aborts and even by law enforcement officers who wanted to silence them. Thousands of rescuers across the nation were arrested, fined, and sentenced to lengthy jail terms. Attacks against pro-lifers escalated after Congress passed the 1994 Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, which made it a federal crime to block the entrance to an abortion clinic.

Col. Maxson soon realized that pro-lifers needed legal help to deal with the arrests, harassment, and outright assaults so they could focus on their calling: to save babies from the abortionist’s scalpel. And so the idea for a pro-life, non-profit, pro bono law firm was conceived.

Initially, our attorneys exclusively handled cases involving sidewalk rescuers. Soon, however, Life Legal’s caseload grew to include a broad spectrum of cases implicating the protection of vulnerable life. In the ensuing 30 years, Life Legal has taken tens of thousands of calls for help. Our nationwide attorney network has grown to over 5,000 affiliates. At the outset, our motto was “No case is too small.” Since then, we’ve amended our motto to add, “And no case is too big.”

Here are just a handful of the many notable cases we have handled over the past 30 years:

As the ranks of the rescue movement grew, the abortion cartel became desperate to stop them. The National Abortion Federation (NAF) and the National Organization for Women alleged that opposing abortion is akin to racism by resorting to a post-Civil War law, the Klu Klux Klan Act. They claimed pro-lifers showed discriminatory “animus” or hostility toward women. Using this tactic, they were able to get lower courts to issue “stay away” orders keeping pro-lifers from abortion mills. The orders were enforced through huge fines and exorbitant attorney fees. Life Legal was successful in getting NAF’s case thrown out in California by showing how wrong NAF’s reasoning was. The Supreme Court agreed. In Bray v. Alexandria Women’s Health Center, the Court held that the rescuers did not hold a discriminatory view of women; rather they “intended to protect the victims of abortion.”

Pro-aborts next took the battle to state courts and individual abortionists sued one by one to get court orders restricting where pro-life sidewalk counselors could stand, how they could move, and even what they could say. Life Legal took on many of these cases, fighting all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court against unconstitutional limits on lifesaving speech.

In 2007, Life Legal sued Planned Parenthood on behalf of Denise Fairbanks, an Ohio teenager whose father repeatedly raped her. When she became pregnant, the father brought her to Planned Parenthood for an abortion. Denise told PP staff her father was molesting her, but they ignored her plea for help. Not only was Denise forced to have an abortion, she had to endure almost two more years of sexual abuse. Denise expressed her...
gratitude to Life Legal, saying “For six years Planned Parenthood did everything possible to try to defeat my claims and drown out my message, but Life Legal came to my aid. It’s unimaginable what Life Legal attorneys sacrificed for me and for all the abused and exploited girls like me.”

Because the FACE Act is focused on obstruction and violence, and sidewalk counselors don’t engage in those practices, some states and local municipalities began enacting “buffer” and “bubble zone” laws. These laws, written by the abortion lobby, force pro-lifers to keep a prescribed distance (usually 8 feet) from clinic entrances or from women entering abortion clinics, which makes it very difficult to have a meaningful conversation about alternatives to abortion.

We have represented hundreds of sidewalk advocates prosecuted under the FACE Act or local buffer and bubble zone laws. In May 2008, we received a call from Rev. Walter Hoye, who had been arrested for standing outside Family Planning Associates (FPA) abortion facility holding a sign reading “God loves you and your baby. Let us help.” Apparently Rev. Hoye had a negative impact on FPA’s bottom line, as its director had called in a favor to get the city council to pass a bubble zone law prohibiting Walter from approaching within 8 feet of women entering the clinic. It became nearly impossible for the soft-spoken Rev. Hoye to communicate with women seeking abortion—which is exactly what the clinic director wanted.

When the judge sentenced Walter to one year in jail, those in the audience gasped. Life Legal appealed the verdict and ultimately the District Attorney dismissed the charges. Even though Walter was acquitted, he had to serve 20 days in jail before the charges were dropped.

Life Legal sued the City of Oakland in federal court on the grounds that the ordinance violated Walter’s First Amendment rights. In 2011, the 9th Circuit ruled that Oakland’s ordinance was unconstitutional “as applied,” holding that the City unlawfully discriminated against pro-lifers in its enforcement of the ordinance. This was a huge victory, as the 9th Circuit is not known for issuing opinions favorable to the pro-life cause.

In 2009, the Obama administration conducted nationwide FACE Act trainings in collaboration with Planned Parenthood. The Department of Justice filed numerous civil FACE Act lawsuits against peaceful pro-life sidewalk counselors seeking exorbitant fines and damages. In Holder v. Hamilton, Life Legal represented David Hamilton, who was trying to talk with a woman entering a Kentucky abortion clinic when a clinic “escort” thrust out her arm to forcefully block him from giving the woman pro-life literature, assaulting David in the process. When David moved the escort’s arm out of the way, she claimed he had assaulted her and called the police. Eric Holder’s DOJ filed a FACE Act suit against David seeking more than $20,000 in fines and damages. After Life Legal won an early victory in court, the DOJ settled the case in 2012.

When David Daleiden and the Center for Medical Progress released a series of videos in 2015 showing Planned Parenthood executives negotiating the sale of aborted baby body parts for profit, the nation was horrified. The National Abortion Federation (NAF), Planned Parenthood, and fetal tissue broker StemExpress sued David, his collaborators, and CMP’s directors for damages and to stop the release of additional footage, but the damage was done. No lawsuit could erase the image of Mary Gatter, President of PP’s Medical Council, haggling about the price of baby livers over lunch while saying she wanted a Lamborghini.

Life Legal was brought into the CMP cases as soon as the first suit was filed. We celebrated as StemExpress dropped its lawsuit a year into the case. And we watched, stunned, as then-Attorney General of California Kamala Harris sent a dozen armed officers to raid Daleiden’s apartment. A year later, her successor, Xavier Becerra, announced that he had filed 15 felony criminal charges against Daleiden and Susan Merritt, who assisted in filming the videos. In the nearly four years since the cases began, we have filed endless motions, briefs, and responses as we faced off against the legal behemoths representing NAF and Planned Parenthood.

In addition to cases involving abortion, we have intervened in thousands of cases where patients are denied life-sustaining care. We were involved in the Terri Schiavo case from the very beginning, helping Terri’s parents fight a corrupt legal system to save their daughter. Two years ago, we helped 39-year-old Melanie, who suffered a stroke that left her paralyzed and unable to talk. She was sent to hospice care without food to be starved to death. Our attorney was able to get nutrition restored and Melanie made a full recovery. We have taken on untold numbers of similar cases, many involving children who are condemned to death solely because they are disabled.

In 2016, Life Legal challenged California’s assisted suicide law. We won significant victories at the trial court, but we were recently handed a setback by the appellate court. This summer, we are back in court again on the case.

While we handle a diverse array of pro-life cases, we never forget that our roots are in representing those who offer a lifeline to women seeking abortion. So when we heard that Ron K. was viciously attacked as he participated in a pro-life vigil outside a San Francisco Planned Parenthood, our attorneys stepped up. Because local police have done nothing to apprehend the assailant, we are filing a civil lawsuit against the perpetrator.

We are also preparing for trial in the case of four “Red Rose Rescuers” who peacefully entered a Washington D.C. abortion clinic to offer women alternatives to abortion.
I was deeply immersed in the failed attempt to save Terri Schiavo’s life. Perhaps that’s why I feel duty-bound to correct every attempt by the left to revise the case’s history in order to wield it as a cudgel to attack conservatives.

Here’s the myth constantly pushed: Social-conservative Republicans interfered with the intimate family decision making of devoted husband Michael Schiavo, who selflessly sought to obey the express wishes of his beloved Terri not to be kept alive if in a profoundly cognitively disabled state. That’s a profound distortion—to put it kindly—of what really happened.

We find the latest such myth-weaving in a New York Magazine article criticizing the religious right for leaping to oppose the starvation death of Dutch teenager Noa Pothoven,3 not because of religion but to defend the intrinsic value of life). I could deconstruct that nonsense too, but let’s stick with the Schiavo mendacity. From the piece by Sarah Jones:

Terri Schiavo had been in a persistent vegetative state for years by the time her husband, Michael, filed to remove her feeding tube. Her parents objected and instigated a legal battle. They found powerful allies: then-governor Jeb Bush, with an assist from brother George, tried to force Schiavo’s husband and her medical team to keep her on nutrition in a Florida facility.

Her husband insisted that Schiavo never wanted to be kept alive by artificial means. Doctors believed that she would never recover and was not aware of her surroundings.

Those facts didn’t matter to the Bushes, or to the Christian right, to whom Schiavo’s name became a rallying cry; her death, to them, was not a private tragedy but a collective sin, tantamount to murder. Trump and Bush and their ilk all tap into the same fears and the same strain of outrage that helped spread the tale of Pothoven’s supposed euthanasia so far beyond the Netherlands.

It’s important to remember the truth:

• Michael Schiavo was not a loving husband but had essentially abandoned Terri to live with another woman—he called her his fiancée® and they are now married—with whom he had sired two children by the time Terri died. If that doesn’t qualify as “estrangement,” what does? At the very least, it created a profound personal conflict of interest between Michael and Terri.

• Terri’s trial guardian ad litem recommended against dehydrating Terri due to Michael’s personal and financial conflicts of interest (he stood to gain hundreds of thousands of dollars if she died from the proceeds from a medical malpractice case). The response by the judge was to remove the guardian—and not appoint another, which was contrary to Florida law. (There were many legal irregularities on the road to Terri’s dehydration; if you want to know more, hit this link.)

• When Michael pursued the malpractice case, he testified that he would care for Terri the rest of her natural life, which experts testified could be many years—highly relevant to the issue of money damages. Somehow, the panel was never told that Terri might not live as long as expected because Michael would remove medical treatment. Within months of the money being in the bank, Michael
tried to take away her antibiotics when she had an infection—thwarted by her family.

- The statements by Terri that she “wouldn’t want to live” were testified to by Michael and his brother-in-law—and even if true, were stated in very casual conversations. The family presented contrary evidence of conversations Terri had with friends. In any event, as a young woman, Terri unsurprisingly never made a clear, deliberate, and carefully considered decision about what she would want if she ever became so incapacitated.

- It wasn’t just the social-conservative right that wanted to save Terri, but also some on the secular left—such as the very-liberal activists within the disability-rights movement and Ralph Nader. Many on the religious left also opposed the dehydration. For example, Jesse Jackson traveled to Florida to stand in solidarity with the family at a demonstration.

- The federal Terri Schiavo law was not an imposition by President George W. Bush or Republicans, but was one of the most bi-partisan passed during the Bush presidency. It received unanimous consent in the U.S. Senate, including from Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Tom Harkin (who was a prime mover in support of the bill), Harry Reid, Dianne Feinstein, etc. Forty-five percent of the House Democrat caucus voting also supported the bill.

I could go on and on.

The Terri Schiavo case tore this country apart, and alas, proved a significant accelerant to the spread of the culture of death in America. But it was not—at alas, proved a significant accelerant to the spread of euthanasia story spread so quickly.html

Cases Resolved:

State of Florida vs. McCulfor (Fla.)—At University of Tallahassee a woman destroyed signs and accused pro-lifer of battery at pro-life Created Equal event. Victory! Charges dismissed.

Utah v. Linton (Wasatch, Ut.)—Father James Linton was unlawfully issued a citation for trespass while sidewalk counseling in an area open to the general public outside of the Wasatch Women’s Center. Victory! Criminal charges likely to be dismissed.

Passmore v. 21st Century Oncology (Fla.)—Two employees at an oncology clinic in Florida were terminated after one of them posted a video of an emergency at an abortion clinic in their complex. Although other employees observed the emergency, only the Christian, pro-life employees were fired. The employees filed a federal employment discrimination suit. Case ended with an adverse decision on the motion for summary judgment.

Denial of Care Cases:

In addition to the cases cited above, Life Legal has intervened in a number of cases involving patients who were denied life-sustaining care. In Minneapolis, we intervened on behalf of Katie Cassidy, a lung-cancer patient who was told the hospital planned to remove her oxygen. We sent a demand letter to the hospital and the hospital agreed to provide oxygen and other medical care as needed. In another case involving a family dispute over care, a California hospital placed a 74-year-old woman on “comfort care,” depriving her of nutrition, hydration, and medical treatment. We were able to get her food and water restored and get her transferred to another facility where she is receiving excellent care. In Milwaukee, a hospital unilaterally removed food and water from a patient over the objection of the patient’s daughter. We worked with a local attorney to get the patient the care she needs, including nutrition and hydration.
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The D.C. clinic is run by notorious late-term abortionist Steven Brigham, who lost his medical licenses in seven states for gross negligence and committing illegal abortions.

Looking ahead, we see that Planned Parenthood and its allies will stop at nothing to keep women from the truth about abortion. To this end, abortionists are changing the child-killing paradigm by promoting chemical abortions as a “safe and easy” alternative to surgical abortion. Chemical abortions, which entail the ingestion of two powerful drugs, now account for about 40% of all abortions. PP’s goal is for chemical abortions to be available by video conference so women will not cross paths with pro-lifers with accurate information about abortion.

Life Legal is researching the unreported adverse effects of chemical abortion and we are preparing to release this information nationwide to sidewalk advocates as well as to young women who may be contemplating abortion. We are also participating in initiatives to restrict the use of these dangerous abortion drugs.

As we look back on thirty years of protecting life in the courtroom and the public square, we are immensely grateful to all who stand with us. Unlike Planned Parenthood, we do not receive taxpayer funding. Life Legal’s life-saving work would not be possible without your generous and often sacrificial support.

You make Life Legal possible!