

# SBC leader compares personhood movement to abolition

by [Bob Allen](#)

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) – The Southern Baptist Convention’s top ethics leader compared an upcoming vote on Mississippi’s proposed personhood amendment to the abolition of slavery.

“If we’re going to be a civilized society, we need to extend to unborn children, from the moment of conception forward, the protections of life just as we once had to extend the protections of the law to those that were held in bondage,” Richard Land, head of the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, [said](#) on his weekly radio program Nov. 5.

In an e-mail alert Nov. 4, Land threw his support behind a Nov. 8 ballot initiative to legally define “persons” as meaning from the moment of conception, [according](#) to Baptist Press.

“I believe you’ll agree it is unjust and inaccurate to classify certain human beings as ‘non-persons,’” Land wrote to Mississippi subscribers of the ERLC’s e-mail newsletter. “Amendment 26 will clarify this for the state of Mississippi and bring full legal protection to its unborn citizens.”

In this weekend’s edition of “Richard Land Live,” the convention’s top spokesman for moral and ethical concerns said the personhood vote is controversial “because it would bring into question a lot of practices people don’t think about that are causing people to kill unborn human beings.”

“For instance the intrauterine device -- the IUD -- allows conception to take place and then prevents

implantation on the uterine wall," Land said. He dismissed arguments that life begins at some point later than conception, like fetal viability, as "silly" and "dangerous."

He said those looking for what the Bible says on the subject need look no further than Psalm 51:5. "David says at the moment of his conception he had a sin nature," Land said. "Only a human being can have a sin nature. You've got to have a soul and a spirit to have a sin nature."

Land said he hopes Mississippi voters won't be confused by the "collateral noise" of arguments being leveled against the amendment.

"I think Mississippi will go down in history as striking a tremendous blow for the pro-life cause," Land said. "I believe we've got to get to the place -- knowing what we know now about unborn babies -- that everything about that baby is determined at the moment of conception."

Land said some questions not addressed in the amendment, like ectopic pregnancy, would have to be dealt with by the state legislature.

"Certainly if we're for life we are going to be for preserving the mother's life," he said. "In an ectopic pregnancy the baby is going to die. The only question is if he'll take the mother's life too. Of course we're not pacifists. We believe it is OK to take life to defend life."

"People say: 'What about a woman who uses an intrauterine device? Are we going to charge her?'" said Land. "No, never charge a mother. Whenever there is an abortion that takes place the mother is a second victim."

"I'd charge the person who dispensed the IUD," he said. "I would charge the doctor that dispensed it. Would you charge them with murder? No, because you have to have a commonly accepted, widespread agreement about murder in order to have it be murder."

Land said whatever charge is filed should depend on what the practitioner did.

"That's why we have things like involuntary manslaughter," he said.

"That's why we have things like negligent homicide. What I would do is I would probably start off by saying any doctor -- any person other than the mother who kills or is responsible for the killing of an unborn baby from conception onward that is not meant to save the mother's life or not because of fatal deformity of the fetus or something like that -- they will lose their license to practice medicine for a year if they are a doctor, will face a \$10,000 fine on the first instance and perhaps a year in jail on the second instance."

"These are the things you do after you pass the law, then your legislators pass laws to deal with issues that are raised by it," Land said. Raising the issue in an effort to defeat the personhood amendment, Land said, is "obfuscation."