

## Thought Piece: City of Amarillo Considers Sanctuary City for the Unborn (SCFTU) Ordinances (Updated)

By Jimmy Witcher, Senior Pastor, Trinity Fellowship Church  
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*(This Thought Piece was updated on January 6, 2024. On December 29, 2023, a group of Amarillo citizens initiated the [voter referendum process](#)<sup>1</sup> to put an ordinance on the city council agenda as outlined in the city of Amarillo charter. The Initiating Committee is in the process of collecting signatures of registered Amarillo voters with the intent of having this ordinance placed on the council's agenda and, depending on the council's decision, the ballot in either May or November 2024.*

*This Thought Piece has been updated to reflect the [ordinance proposed by the initiating committee](#).<sup>2</sup> Though quite similar, the newly proposed ordinance does not include public enforcement sections 8-6-12, 8-6-13, or 8-6-14. Additionally, section 8-6-4 has been modified to define trafficking as "Abortion Trafficking of an Unborn Child.")*

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The City Council of Amarillo is considering potential ordinances intended to combat abortion in our region. Additionally, a group of concerned citizens has put forth the official effort to collect signatures to have a proposed ordinance put before the council for consideration and, depending upon their decision, on the ballot in May or November to be decided by the voters of Amarillo.

This thought piece aims to provide both an overview of the issues and a Biblical framework for processing them. It is also a "call to prayer" for every believer willing to stand in the fight for life.

As Christians, we hold the sanctity of life in the highest regard. We firmly believe all human life is derived from God and is, therefore, holy and sacred. As David stated in Psalm 139:

*<sup>13</sup> You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. <sup>15</sup> You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. <sup>16</sup> You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. <sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://amarilocouncilforum.org/wp-content/uploads/asgarosforum/51/Initiative-and-Referendum-Process-Outline-sc1-4-24.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://amarilocouncilforum.org/wp-content/uploads/asgarosforum/37/Petition-for-Initiative-12.29.2023.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ps 139:13–16). Tyndale House Publishers.

We profess that life begins at conception, that a “fetus” is a child, and that these children have rights. Further, we recognize we have a divine, moral responsibility to stand for the rights of these children who cannot stand for themselves. Psalm 82 states:

*<sup>3</sup> “Give justice to the poor and the orphan; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. <sup>4</sup> Rescue the poor and helpless; deliver them from the grasp of evil people.” <sup>4</sup>*

While the vast majority of Amarillo citizens are decidedly pro-life, the national pro-choice movement is committed to providing abortion services in every zip code across the United States <sup>5</sup>, even in states like Texas, where abortion has been declared illegal. The proposed ordinances seek to close existing loopholes that currently allow abortions to be performed in Amarillo, providing protection for the rights of the unborn children in this community.

Here are a few important considerations:

1. More than half of all abortions currently performed in the United States are “medication abortions,” meaning they are chemically induced by taking prescribed medications. “In 2000, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved mifepristone as a method of abortion. Taken along with misoprostol, the two-drug combination is known as medication abortion or the ‘abortion pill.’”<sup>6</sup> There are numerous corporations actively marketing the abortion pill to the citizens of Amarillo.

Regarding the initial approval process of medication abortion, the FDA was able to fast-track the approval process by labeling pregnancy an “illness”. Since approval of this medication, the FDA has ignored petitions by concerned healthcare professionals for over 16-years regarding the safety of these drugs. In addition, the FDA has removed safeguards and lifted restrictions on these medications since 2016 to include increasing the gestational age of the baby from 7 to 10 weeks, changing the dosage, and eliminating in-person office visits along with the requirement for abortionists to report any complications. In 2021, the FDA stated they would also allow these medications to be sent through the mail.<sup>7</sup>

In November 2022, the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine (AHM) sued the FDA in Amarillo, Texas claiming that the FDA had unlawfully approved the drug and alleged that the pill was unsafe. Of particular concern to AHM was the FDA’s amended

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<sup>4</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Ps 82:3–4). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2021/01/28/president-biden-taking-first-steps-undo-trump-anti-abortion-actions/4282099001/>

“We are deeply committed to making sure everyone has access to care – including reproductive health care – regardless of income, race, zip code, health insurance status, or immigration status,” Biden said in a joint statement with Vice President Kamala Harris recognizing the 48th anniversary of Roe v. Wade last week.” -Groppe, Maureen; USA Today; Jan. 28, 2021

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gutmacher.org/article/2022/02/medication-abortion-now-accounts-more-half-all-us-abortions>

<sup>7</sup> <https://adfllegal.org/press-release/court-halts-fdas-unlawful-approval-chemical-abortion-drugs>

allowance for “telemedicine” doctors to approve prescriptions for the abortion pill without physically seeing their patients.

AHM won its suit, temporarily limiting the availability of these drugs; however, an appellate court put a stay on the decision, allowing the drug to remain on the market with some restrictions.<sup>8</sup> On December 13, 2023, the US Supreme Court announced that it would hear the case early in 2024 with an expected answer mid-summer.

2. Unborn children are being trafficked across state borders – particularly the Texas-New Mexico border – by abortion traffickers who are often funded by pro-choice organizations operating both within and without the State of Texas. These organizations offer financial and logistical support, including airfare, travel, hotel stays, gas, meals, childcare expenses, rental car fees, etc.
3. The remains of unborn children killed by abortion have reportedly been shipped to and disposed of as medical waste in the State of Texas through the help of a local business in Amarillo.<sup>9</sup> Abortion providers in New Mexico and Colorado have shipped these remains to Amarillo.

The proposed ordinance utilizes **private enforcement**, meaning it would be enforced through private civil action (i.e., a lawsuit). Any individual would be able to file a lawsuit against anyone – individual or corporation – who violated the ordinance.

It is important to note that this ordinance specifically *prevents* the city of Amarillo and any officer or employee thereof from initiating a private civil action. It is the unique structure of the ordinance – particularly the private enforcement – that has allowed similar ordinances to withstand opposition.<sup>10</sup>

The proposed ordinance seeks to accomplish the following:

- Section 8-6-1 is a list of definitions of terms.
- Section 8-6-2 makes it “unlawful for any person to procure or perform an elective abortion of any type and at any stage of pregnancy in the city of Amarillo, Texas.” (underline added) It further makes it “unlawful for any person to knowingly engage in conduct that aids or abets an elective abortion” if that abortion takes place in the city of Amarillo.
- Section 8-6-3 makes it “unlawful for any person to knowingly perform an elective abortion or knowingly engage in conduct that aids or abets an elective abortion if the abortion is performed on a resident of Amarillo, regardless of the location of

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67707317>

<sup>9</sup> <https://prolifewitness.org/breaking-babies-aborted-in-new-mexico-transported-to-texas-for-disposal/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/06/01/abortion-planned-parenthood-lubbock/>

the abortion...” (underline added)

- Section 8-6-4 makes it “unlawful for any person to knowingly transport any individual for the purpose of providing or obtaining an elective abortion...if the transportation of such individual begins, ends, or passes through the city of Amarillo.” (underline added)
- Section 8-6-5 makes it “unlawful for any person to ... manufacture, possess, or distribute abortion-inducing drugs in Amarillo...” and to “mail, transport, deliver, or provide abortion-inducing drugs in any manner to or from any person or location in Amarillo...” (underline added)
- Section 8-6-6 declares organizations that use the mail for delivery of “any article or thing designed, adapted, or intended for producing abortion; or any article, instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing” designed or advertised for producing an abortion to be a “criminal organization.” The section goes on to make it “unlawful for any criminal organization...to operate or do business in the city of Amarillo.” (underline added)
- Section 8-6-7 makes it “unlawful for any person to transport the remains of an unborn child who was killed by an elective abortion from any abortion provider into the city of Amarillo, or to dispose of such remains from any abortion provider within the city of Amarillo.” (underline added)

None of the sections in this ordinance penalize the mother of an unborn child who has an elective abortion. Further, the proposed ordinances do not prohibit Plan B or similar “morning-after” pills. They also only address “elective abortions” and not abortions performed in response to a medical emergency.

A common question asked is, “***With the Supreme Court rulings of Roe v. Wade (1973) and Casey (1992) being overturned and with the Texas ‘Heartbeat Law’ being in effect, why does the city of Amarillo need to pass these ordinances?***”

First, while Texas has laws intended to prevent citizens from getting abortion-inducing medications online, they are *not* stopping the inflow of these drugs. Out-of-state companies are actively soliciting and shipping abortion-inducing drugs into Texas. (To see example companies targeting Texans, see <https://plancpills.org/abortion-pill/texas> and <https://aidaccess.org/en/page/2934646/where-can-i-get-the-abortion-pill-online-in-texas> .) Additionally, Mexico and India also provide these drugs to Texas women through the mail.

Second, since the overturning of Roe, well-funded, pro-choice organizations and liberal corporations are actively targeting citizens in states like Texas, providing transportation services, abortion “insurance,” and in some cases, back-pay for time lost at work for individuals seeking an abortion out-of-state.

Finally, in a letter dated August 21, 2023, twenty Texas lawmakers signed an [open letter](#)<sup>11</sup> to Texas city councils, county commissions, and local officials encouraging them to adopt “ordinances outlawing abortion and abortion trafficking and declaring their cities and counties *Sanctuaries for the Unborn.*” (emphasis as quoted) One of the signers of this letter was Texas Senator Bryan Hughes, author of the Texas Heartbeat Law. Section 311.036(b) of the law says, “A [a Texas state] statute may not be construed to restrict a political subdivision from regulating or prohibiting abortion in a manner that is at least as stringent as the laws of this state...”<sup>12</sup> In other words, the Texas Heartbeat Law specifically provides for cities and counties to further restrict abortion, and the author of the law has signed a letter encouraging them to do so.

### **So, what is at stake?**

Life. The life of unborn children is at stake. The pro-choice proponents are pushing strongly for the city council to shelve these conversations, citing the overturning of Roe and the current Texas laws prohibiting abortion. They are pushing for this, knowing that abortion-inducing drugs are easily making their way into Amarillo and that organizations are actively transporting women out of the area for elective abortions.

As a Christian and as the Ekklesia, I believe it is important we stand for those who do not have the power to stand for themselves. Our Founding Fathers, in the building of our great republic, made this declaration:

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...”*<sup>13</sup>

The issues before the city council are both weighty and complex. I believe these men are in office for “*such a time as this*”<sup>14</sup> as they exercise the “*just powers*” they have derived from the electorate who put them into office.

### **Call to Prayer**

It is important for us, the Ekklesia, to be in prayer. We are called to pray for God’s intervention in our culture and for there to be an end to abortion. As Jesus says in Matthew 16, “<sup>18</sup> *Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.* <sup>19</sup> *And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven.*”<sup>15</sup> As we

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.scribd.com/document/671303954/SCFTU-Elected-Official-Letter>

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

<sup>14</sup> “Who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?” Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Esther 4:14). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>15</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Mt 16:18–19). Tyndale House Publishers.

enter the courts of heaven in prayer, we release spiritual authority to push back the powers of hell. As Paul says in Ephesians 6, “<sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.” <sup>16</sup>

This is an opportunity for us, as the Ekklesia, to exercise our God-given authority, take a spiritual stand, and effect change in Amarillo as we stand for life, declaring Amarillo to be a sanctuary city for the unborn.

We are also called to pray for our city leaders. 1 Timothy 2 says, “<sup>2</sup> Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup> This is good and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.” <sup>17</sup> We pray for them to have boldness, strength, and divine wisdom as they consider these important issues.

### **Call to Action**

Prayerfully consider supporting the initiating committee by signing the petition. Your voice matters. This citizen-led effort is an exercise of our constitutional rights. It is an opportunity for the Ekklesia to engage in the governmental process, letting our leaders know what is important to us – the sanctity of life.

It is important for us to show our support for the council as they work through the governmental process of evaluation and implementation of these ordinances. If you would like to send an encouraging note of support, the email addresses of each of the members of the city council are below.

Cole Stanley – Mayor  
[cole.stanley@amarillo.gov](mailto:cole.stanley@amarillo.gov)

Josh Craft – Councilmember, Place 1  
[josh.craft@amarillo.gov](mailto:josh.craft@amarillo.gov)

Don Tipps – Councilmember, Place 2  
[don.tipps@amarillo.gov](mailto:don.tipps@amarillo.gov)

Tom Scherlen – Councilmember, Place 3  
[tom.scherlen@amarillo.gov](mailto:tom.scherlen@amarillo.gov)

Les Simpson – Councilmember, Place 4  
[les.simpson@amarillo.gov](mailto:les.simpson@amarillo.gov)

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<sup>16</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Eph 6:12). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>17</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (1 Ti 2:2–4). Tyndale House Publishers.