

# Personhood Amendments: Coming to a Ballot Near You?

*Mississippi may approve the country's most radical anti-abortion law on Tuesday, but other states aren't far behind.*

By [Kate Sheppard](#) | Tue Nov. 8, 2011 3:00 AM PST

---

Mississippi may be the only state [asking voters to decide](#) [1] whether or not to ban all abortions and many forms of contraception this Election Day. But if anti-abortion groups get their way, there will be a host of similar measures on the ballot in 2012.

Efforts are underway in at least six states to adopt similar laws via constitutional amendments, according to NARAL Pro-Choice America, which is tracking the initiatives. The specific language varies from state to state, but all of the measures seek to redefine human life as beginning at conception. (And as my colleague [Nick Baumann reports today](#) [2], federal lawmakers are also circulating similar measures.)

**Map Legend:**  Voting in 2011  Tried and Failed  2012 Battleground

The group California Civil Rights Foundation is [trying to get an amendment](#) [3] on the 2012 ballot defining a "person" as "all living human beings from beginning of biological development as human organism." In Florida, the anti-abortion advocates at American Life League and Personhood USA have [launched a signature-gathering effort](#) [4] for a similar initiative that would grant rights starting at "the beginning of the biological development of that human being." The Montana ProLife Coalition is also gathering signatures for a ballot measure that would [amend the state constitution](#) [5] to define "person" to encompass "the stage of fertilization or conception."

The Nevada Pro-life Coalition, meanwhile, has taken a slightly different tack that would nevertheless achieve the same end, with an effort to outlaw "the intentional taking of a prenatal person's life" via an [amendment to the state constitution](#) [6]. The measure would guarantee the "unalienable right to life" of "every human being at all stages of biological development before birth."

In Ohio, the state's attorney general [rejected an effort](#) [7] to get a personhood measure on the ballot in 2011, because he felt the summary of the measure offered by anti-abortion activists was not "fair and truthful." The activists [have already pledged](#) [8] to try again for 2012 election. Similarly, the Oregon Human Life

Amendment Committee [tried to get a measure on the ballot for 2010](#) [9] that would guarantee protection for "all human beings...including their unborn offspring at every state of their biological development, including fertilization." The measure got tied up in litigation, but anti-abortion advocates are [trying again for 2012](#) [10].

An anti-abortion activist in Alaska [attempted to get a personhood measure](#) [11] on the ballot for 2011, [one that stated](#) [12] that "the natural right to life and body of the unborn child supercedes [sic] the statutory right of the mother to consent to the injury or death of her unborn child." But the state's attorney general [rejected it](#) [13], finding that the language was "clearly unconstitutional." In Colorado, voters rejected a ballot measure to define human life starting "at the beginning of biological development" in 2010 [by a 3 to 1 margin](#) [14]. Voters there also rejected a similar effort in 2008.

*Map produced by Tasneem Raja*

---

**Source URL:** <http://motherjones.com/mojo/2011/11/personhood-amendments-state-map>

**Links:**

[1] <http://motherjones.com/mojo/2011/11/mississippi-personhood-amendment-may-pass-Tuesday>

[2] <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/11/mississippi-personhood-zygote-federal-law>

[3] <http://californiahumanrights.com/content/endorsements-0>

[4] <http://www.personhoodusa.com/group/florida>

[5] <http://sos.mt.gov/elections/Archives/2010s/2012/Initiatives/CI-108.asp>

[6] <http://www.personhoodusa.com/press-release/planned-parenthood-attack-against-personhood-personhood-usa-state-groups-moving-forwar>

[7] <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2011/10/24/no-personhood.html>

[8] <http://thinkprogress.org/health/2011/11/01/358162/personhood-ohio-to-restart-campaign-to-outlaw-abortion/>

[9] [http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Oregon\\_Personhood\\_Amendment\\_%282010%29](http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Oregon_Personhood_Amendment_%282010%29)

[10] <http://www.personhoodusa.com/group/Oregon>

[11] <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/alaska-officials-reject-unconstitutional-abortion-banning-measure/>

[12] [http://www.elections.alaska.gov/petitions/10NRTL/10NRTL\\_Sponsor\\_Language.pdf](http://www.elections.alaska.gov/petitions/10NRTL/10NRTL_Sponsor_Language.pdf)

[13] [http://juneauempire.com/stories/011211/loc\\_768878153.shtml](http://juneauempire.com/stories/011211/loc_768878153.shtml)

[14] <http://blogs.wsj.com/law/2010/11/03/colorado-voters-slam-personhood-measure/>