



House Transportation

May 9, 2017

SB 163: Oppose

It is the position of the ACLU of Michigan that the state should not sponsor a public forum for political speech and if it does it must open that forum to all viewpoints. The Michigan Legislature's consideration of a Choose Life license plate in the absence of a pro-choice plate constitutes viewpoint discrimination that the ACLU contends is a violation of free speech rights.

Ultimately, it is our position that all Michiganders of all political beliefs should have access to avenues for the free expression of ideas. In the past, this legislature has refused to give the same consideration for legislation introduced to support a countervailing position in favor of reproductive freedom.

Legislation establishing "Choose life" plates is not viewpoint neutral. The state could propose a procedure that would allow both sides of this debate to request their own specialty plates. What the state should not do is favor one side in a political debate by providing for only that side to place its slogan on license plates.

Furthermore, this legislation establishes a process by which proceeds from the sale of the plates is funneled into so-called "crisis pregnancy centers." These centers are often unlicensed, unregulated, and typically provide women with deceptive, incomplete, and medically inaccurate information about their pregnancies and options.

Motorists should be free to make direct contributions to organizations of their own choosing. The state, however, should not set up a scheme by which money is funneled to organizations representing only one side of a political debate.

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