



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Moral Crisis in Medicine: An Obstetrician Takes a Stand for Life

Guest(s): Dr. Robert Lawler

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. When a physician takes the Hippocratic Oath, they pledge to first do no harm. But what happens when the government tries to force doctors to violate that sacred commitment? On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're bringing you a classic conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and his guest, Dr. Robert Lawler, a board certified obstetrician serving communities on Chicago's South Side. With over two decades of experience delivering babies, Dr. Lawler is also medical director of OSF Little Company of Mary Medical Center, and a member of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists. When Illinois passed a law requiring pro-life physicians to refer patients for abortions, Dr. Lawler faced an impossible choice, compromise his conscience or risk his practice. His courageous stand for life reminds us why defending religious freedom matters now more than ever before. So let's get into this classic conversation on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Today, we're honored to have Dr. Robert Lawler with us. He's a distinguished obstetrician and gynecologist at Good Samaritan Hospital in Illinois, I think Chicago. And he's been with other prestigious medical institutions through the years. In fact, for 25 years, he's been delivering babies and caring for pregnant women. And I have great respect for him. I've heard about him before. This is the first time that we've had an opportunity to get acquainted. And I will introduce him to you in a moment. He is a member of the American Academy of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists. And many of those men and women are my friends. I have spoken for that organization in the past, and I just was delighted to learn that he is one of them. Dr. Lawler's practice is in the state of Illinois where the legislature there has passed an egregious bill. It's almost breathtaking to recognize what they have done, which was a law signed now by Governor Bruce Rauner that requires physicians and pharmacists and pregnancy resource centers to urge pregnant women if they ask to be referred to abortion clinics, told how to get to them, and also be given information and urging to get an abortion as the best option for that woman.

Even those who are pro-life must also try to influence women who seek abortion, regardless of their own moral convictions. And Dr. Robert Lawler is

one of those physicians that is determined to save as many babies as he can. Let me introduce him now. He's had 25 years of experience, as I said. He loves his patients and loves what God has called him to do. And yet now he's being forced to do things that he feels are unethical, immoral, and evil. Dr. Lawler, thank you for being with us today and for your fighting the battle on behalf of unborn children. And you're on the phone with us now. It's a pleasure to have you here.

Dr. Robert Lawler: Well, thank you for having me, Dr. Dobson. It's a pleasure to be here. And yes, in January of this year, our governor, Governor Rauner, signed a law, which was an amendment to the Healthcare Right of Conscience Act, which was a response to the original *Roe vs. Wade*, which protected physicians and healthcare providers, pharmacists, from having to violate their conscious, their religiously held beliefs and their medical beliefs as it pertained to the child in the womb. And this amendment, in essence, gutted the Conscience Act. And what was most egregious about it, Dr. Dobson, was that what this amendment wanted us to do, pregnancy resource centers throughout Chicago land and throughout the state of Illinois, it wanted us, if asked, to provide these abortion-minded women, not only referral for an abortion, but also a written list of where they might be able to procure the abortion and then to discuss the benefits of having abortion. And as a medical doctor, I can tell you, in my opinion, there are no benefits to abortion.

Dr. James Dobson: I heard you interviewed by Tucker Carlson on this subject and you said that you have two patients when there is a pregnancy. Explain what you said there.

Dr. Robert Lawler: Right. And I think everybody, all your listeners, everyone throughout the country would agree that as an obstetrician, I have two patients. I have the mother and I have the baby in her womb. And so what in essence this amendment was asking me to do was to refer one of my patients, the baby, off to be executed and the other patient, the mother, to refer her off for a lifetime of regret, psychological trauma, and physical trauma in many occasions.

Dr. James Dobson: As a pro-life physician, you simply can't do that, can you?

Dr. Robert Lawler: You could not comply. And I think, and I know that the framers of this amendment knew that when they put this forth. They knew that doctors, healthcare providers, pharmacists of conscience could never agree to comply with this type of coercion.

Dr. James Dobson: What if the woman doesn't ask for that advice and that information? Can you show her an ultrasound of her baby?

Dr. Robert Lawler: I think that really is right at the crux of this. I think what we are doing at these pregnancy resource centers is we are showing the couple, sometimes just the mother, the humanity that lives within her. And I know it sounds very simple, but we know that once that mother or that father sees the baby, they see the

hands, they see the fingers, they see the profile, that the likelihood of them going through with an abortion drops dramatically.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Lawler, share some of the stories that you've seen or heard firsthand with the women who have been your patients and you've chosen to help them keep their child and decide abortion is not the only way in their minds.

Dr. Robert Lawler: Oh boy. I'd love to share one story of a young lady who came in with her boyfriend and they were heading to the abortion clinic and they had stopped by the pregnancy resource center and I was actually the one doing the ultrasounds that day and I started to show the various body parts of their baby and this baby put on a show for both mother and father. And one of the things that I'll always remember is one, the baby I could tell was a boy, and two, this child opened up its hands and you could see all five digits and I looked and I said, "Oh my goodness gracious, this child is going to be an incredible athlete. Look at the hands on that child." And the young man who was sitting in the corner, all grumpy, kind of looked up and he looked at the screen, he opened up his hand, he looked at his hand and he looked at the hand of his son on the screen and he looked at his little young girlfriend and he said, "We can't kill our baby."

Dr. Robert Lawler: And I thought to myself, "Thank you, Lord." And they did not go through with the abortion and they did deliver a beautiful baby boy. And I think that's what is so powerful about these pregnancy resource centers. We're offering the truth, we're offering true compassion and concern and support. And so I think that this law, this amendment here in Illinois basically is an attempt to silence the pro-life voice because we are winning the battle of hearts and minds.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, what kind of struggle is going on there? Is there an outcry over what the legislature has done?

Dr. Robert Lawler: Yes. And I think that, praise the Lord that shortly after we went on the Tucker Carlson Show in June, approximately three weeks after that, on July 19th, we did have a federal judge step in and put forth a preliminary injunction because prior to that, we were unable to operate because all of these pregnancy resource centers are strictly voluntary, they are funded by donations. We don't have the deep pockets of a Planned Parenthood. We don't have government subsidies of a Planned Parenthood. And so we got a federal injunction statewide, we have resumed operations and we are saving lives and we're making a difference because we're offering alternatives to abortion and it's not just enough to tell a young, scared girl not to have an abortion. You have to back that up with material goods, with education and with spiritual support.

Dr. James Dobson: Are there other states that you know of who are doing the same thing?

Dr. Robert Lawler: Well, I think there are ... California has a very strong, not surprising pro-abortion laws that are very similar to Illinois and a lot on the West Coast, Oregon, likewise. But the point being, and to your point, Dr. Dobson, is that this

law is so one-sided, it actually is asking us to materially cooperate in what we feel is an intrinsically evil act. Also, it's asking me as a physician who took an oath to first do no harm to protect my patient. It's asking me to put that aside and refer my patient for something that I know is going to harm her and harm her baby.

Dr. James Dobson: Obviously you just can't do that.

Dr. Robert Lawler: Just can't. I cannot comply with that.

Dr. James Dobson: Prior to this injunction that you mentioned, are there penalties for not following the law?

Dr. Robert Lawler: Yes. And that's why before the injunction, we had to suspend operations at these pregnancy resource centers because we simply could not afford a fine or we could not afford to litigate it ourselves.

Dr. James Dobson: For how long did that go on?

Dr. Robert Lawler: Well, between when the law became effect on January one through July 19th, there was a small statewide injunction that covered three pregnancy centers that came out in March, but it wasn't until this federal judge stepped in and said, "No, stop this. This is so one sided that we need to litigate it first and then let the chips fall where they may."

Dr. James Dobson: What was the reaction to your interview with Tucker Carlton?

Dr. Robert Lawler: Very positive for the most part. Lots of support from folks from all 50 states saying, "This cannot stand." And maybe they're not on board with everything I said or we were doing, but they get the fact that this is such an overreach of state mandated regulation of medical physicians.

Dr. James Dobson: Has the press been critical of you?

Dr. Robert Lawler: To some extent. I mean, as they are of any pro-life advocate, it kind of goes with the territory, doesn't it? But that's okay. I think that in the end, we have the truth on our side. We provide true informed consent. The other side provides deception. We offer hope and they offer misery. So I think that, like I said prior, this law is an attempt to silence the pro-life voice and it's just not going to work.

Dr. James Dobson: Do I understand that you are suing the governor and the legislature?

Dr. Robert Lawler: That is correct. So with the help of the attorneys at the Thomas Moore Society, we filed lawsuit against Governor Ronner in the state of Illinois and that that is the litigation that is going through the court system at this point in time. We want to convince, of course, the judges that this law is unconstitutional, that this law is clearly a violation of the First Amendment, and that it needs to be

struck down. And that is our sincere hope because like I said prior, if this law is allowed to stand, then what next? It's a very slippery slope, isn't it? There is no doubt that religious liberties are currently under attack and indeed the family is under attack. Oh, sure. And I can't think of anything more destructive to the family than this terrible procedure, the termination of one of our fellow human beings.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you always had this courage to take on the establishment in this regard? I mean, is this something new for you or have you fought for the unborn child all along?

Dr. Robert Lawler: It's been sort of in my genome, I guess. It's always been something that I felt very strongly about. And I think as I grew in my faith, it became even more evident and I'm truly of the belief that if we cannot protect the most vulnerable amongst us, the very, very small, the baby in the womb and the elderly in the nursing home or the down syndrome child, if we can't protect the most vulnerable amongst us, how in the world are we ever really going to achieve any type of peace, any type of equality? It just can't happen because there's a disconnect there. You can't at one time arbitrarily say life has intrinsic value and then at the other time say, "You know what? I don't want this life right now. Please take it out." And I think there's this notion in the country, Dr. Dobson, that we're trying to make abortion somehow palatable.

We're trying to make it a nice procedure. And I'm here to tell the country it's not a nice procedure. The analogy I have used is that this is kicking down the door of a house, it's killing the occupant of the house, and then it's dragging that dead occupant out and discarding them in the dumpster. And if that offends some of our sensibilities, then it should, because that's what's taking place.

Dr. James Dobson: Are there penalties for not following this law if you lose the case?

Dr. Robert Lawler: The answer of course is yes. And to what degree would they enforce those penalties or as some have suggested on the other side, "Well, maybe you should just consider doing something else if you have such a big problem with killing the baby in the womb."

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my.

Dr. Robert Lawler: And so, you know, I think-

Dr. James Dobson: There's no compassion in that at all, is there?

Dr. Robert Lawler: There is none and we are better than that. We are so much better than that. And thanks to people like yourself, Dr. Dobson, people throughout the country are made aware of that and there is a lot of good in this country. We know that, but abortion is one of those situations where it's just pure evil and it needs to be stopped.

Dr. James Dobson: We had Janet Porter on our program. She is a pro-life activist who is fighting tirelessly in the Congress to get the heartbeat bill passed, and that will make a radical change if the Congress should do it.

Dr. Robert Lawler: Absolutely. Because like we talked earlier, ultrasound is showing the human nature of this baby in the womb. I think we all know that, of course, it's a baby in the womb, but when we see these 3D images, when we see that heartbeat, when we see the arms moving, the digits of the fingers, you can't deny the humanity and to say, "You know what? It's okay to just indiscriminately kill that other person is clearly wrong." Dr. Dobson, if history has taught us anything, it is that if you look back over the genocides, the Holocaust of our histories, the first thing, if you want to kill a lot of humans in lots of numbers, the first thing you do is you dehumanize them. That's right. And then you can kill them in the millions. And since *Roe v. Wade* became the law of the land, 60 million of our brothers and sisters have been exterminated in this country alone.

How many wonderful human beings have been snuffed out? How many brilliant doctors or scientists or thinkers have been eliminated from our society? Is it even possible today to consider a world without abortion? What would that world look like? I think it would be a kinder place.

Dr. James Dobson: I wish everyone among our listeners who has compassion for children could have the privilege of seeing babies born. I was given that privilege many times at USC when I was a graduate student in child development. And I tell you how you could kill a little fellow or girl like that. I just cannot imagine the lack of understanding and compassion that so many people have. They'll do anything to kill to promote abortion. And that's what they're doing here. They know that they're stepping over the line, but they think they can get away with it.

Dr. Robert Lawler: Absolutely. And I don't know. I know we have to pray for those people, Dr. Dobson. It is such a financially lucrative industry and it has government support. And when you think about abortion and you think about women who present for an abortion, it's as though the baby has become an inconvenience and that's what they're afraid of. And many of them don't believe there is another way out. And that's where these pregnancy resource centers throughout Chicago and throughout the country, that's where they play such a vital role in giving these young women, many of them young women, the opportunity to choose a different path.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Lawler, we're out of time. I just want to thank you. I want to ask our listeners to pray for you in this struggle. It's a matter of life and death. The book of Deuteronomy, I believe it's the 30th chapter, 19th verse, says, "Behold, I set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Therefore, choose life that you and your children may live." And that says it all as far as I'm concerned. Our prayers will be with you. I would love to get better acquainted with you. Thank you for being my guest and for what you're doing and I believe you're going to win this. I believe the Lord is going to help you prevail. I believe it too. And I pray

that that will occur because there's only one right and wrong here and what has been imposed on you is definitely wrong and I know you feel that.

Dr. Robert Lawler: Yes. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Dr. Lawler's courage to stand for both of his patients, both mother and child, shows us what it means to let conviction guide action even when the cost is high. And if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or if you want to share it with a friend, visit jdfi.net. When government overreach threatens to silence the voices defending life, ministries like the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute become even more essential. Every day, we hear from listeners just like you who tell us that these broadcasts have given them courage to stand for biblical truth in their own communities and professions. Through programs like the one you heard today, we're equipping families with the wisdom and conviction to promote the sanctity of human life, to defend religious freedom, and to uphold the principles that strengthen marriages, families, and communities all across America.

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Well, I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust for the family you love.

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