Those Hard-to-Handle Questions

Tough questions on abortion can originate from anywhere from citizens asking sincere questions to "plants" put up by the opponent or from a hostile media. Though candidates who take the initiative to frame their pro-life stand have to face fewer such "hardball" questions, some may arise even in the most up-front, well-framed campaign. Answers offered here are suggested approaches, not to be recited but to be adapted by candidates or spokesmen in terms of their individual beliefs and styles. They are offered here to help you think about potential questions—and your answers—in advance.

When possible, lead off with the sub-issues on which the pro-life side enjoys the broadest public support. Don't be afraid to repeat these issues; couch your differences with the 'pro-choice' side in terms of these sub-issues.

Please state your position on the woman's right to have an abortion.

I think we need to move beyond labels and discuss the issue as it relates to specific legislation. I support prohibiting a doctor [an abortionist] from committing an abortion [operating] on a teenage girl without her parents' knowledge or consent. I also favor legal protection for babies who are in the final weeks of development inside the womb. Right now, there are abortions even in the late stages of pregnancy.

Don't be afraid to confound the questioners, who often want to appear 'soft' to the audience while you are the one who actually uses the unpleasant word 'abortion.' Make the questioner frame the issue in exact phrases.

What is your position on 'choice?'

What kind of choice? In relation to educational choice, I support the parents' right to choose the best schools for their children. That's why I am an advocate of the school voucher system [if you are!]. In relation to a mother's so-called right to abort her own child, I have problems with that.

Remember, there is a tremendous self-imposed ignorance of abortion in the country today. Be quick to review the facts about abortion.

Please state your position on 'choice.'

There are more than 1.2 million abortions committed in this country every year and 68,000 in Illinois. That's like wiping out the population of Schaumburg or Arlington Heights every year. It's legal for a mother to procure an abortion for any reason or no reason at all, through all nine months of pregnancy. I think there are too many abortions committed in this nation and in Illinois, and I believe our laws on abortion are too lenient.

When attacked as being against 'women's rights,' a defender of life should not be afraid of standing up for life.

But aren't you fundamentally opposed to a woman's right to choose?

We're talking about human life here. My point is this: a little caution is in order. Can we not agree that the wholesale use of abortion to terminate the lives of 1.2 million babies every year is a tragedy? We ought to be able to agree on that. If not, we have lost an important characteristic to being Americans, and that is an optimistic zeal for human life itself.

Remember, the pro-abortion culture is a foreign lifestyle to most families in America, hence most voters. Pro-abortion candidates do not share cultural goals (like traditional values) with Americans. Make them pay for it. Bring up the cultural common denominators you have with middle-class voters. Voluntary school prayer is a good one to highlight . . .

(Wherever you can work it in!)

I think our society is far better off recognizing the existence of God than it is in its current practice of going out of its way to deny His existence or even ridicule Him. I'm concerned about our culture, and I don't think it's wise for our society to turn its back on God. For this reason, I also favor voluntary prayer in public schools.

. . . So are marriage and responsibility over abortion for convenience.

Women* in this country don't need more abortions. They need for more men to take responsibility for their actions. Instead of more abortions, mothers need more support from those men who wrongly believe it's okay for them to abandon their children.

Especially if speaking before a feminist-leaning audience, consider appealing to their own mindset in dispelling the myth that abortion is a boon to women.

What is your position on a woman's right to choose?

It's interesting that you call it a "woman's right to choose" though so often these distressed expectant mothers are procuring abortions only because they're being coerced into such an unnatural act. After all, the people in our society who benefit most from legal, easily available, no-questions-asked abortions are irresponsible males who want to sow their wild oats all over town and get away with not having to pay child support!

Do not allow yourself to be dragged into side issues that could detract from your reform agenda; answer such side-issue questions as briefly as possible and then refocus the discussion of abortion on your own terms.
Refocus the audience on the need for reform with specific examples.

What about cases of rape and incest?

Well first, I don't believe that an act of violence against a pre-born child erases the act of violence that has been committed against his or her mother. But, you know, pregnancy in such cases is really rare, so you're focusing on a matter that is a tiny segment of the abortion question. Our current law needs a good deal of reform before we get even close to that question. Abortion is now legal through the full nine months of pregnancy for virtually any reason or no reason at all; our law is too lenient and should protect at least babies old enough to live outside the womb. Doctors should not be allowed to commit abortions on teenagers without their parents' knowledge; why, a girl cannot get her ears pierced in most states without her parent's consent, but she can undergo surgery as long as it's abortion.

* We advise pro-lifers always to use the term "mother" rather than "woman." In this instance, however, the "answer" is framed to appeal to those whose attitude borders on feminism, quite accurately pointing out that abortion is not a boon to women but is an escape mechanism for (too many) men to avoid responsibility. Hence it opens with the term "women" and moves on into using "mothers."