

# INDEX

Introduction  
What Pro-Life in the Public Square is Not  
PLPS and the Public Sentiment Grid  
Shifting a Public Sentiment Grid  
Pro-Life Waco: The Foundation of PLPS  
Three sub-branches of Public Square Outreach  
Public Square Outreach and Protest  
The Geography of PLPS  
The Importance of Monthly Outreach  
Demand Side and Supply Side  
Upstream and Downstream  
Review  
Conclusion



## What is Pro-Life in the Public Square?

John Pisciotta, Founding Director  
Pro-Life in the Public Square  
Pro-Life Waco

This website is devoted to strengthening the Pro-Life in the Public Square branch of the pro-life movement. (I will use the abbreviation PLPS. And PSO for public square outreach.) PLPS includes all initiatives that influence a community BROADLY. Holding signs over an Interstate pedestrian overpass is clearly public square outreach. A pregnancy care fundraising banquet is only marginally PSO. Both events are important for the pro-life cause. However, the former engages and penetrates the public square broadly. The banquet mostly engages the pro-life faithful. Public square outreach reaches a broad spectrum of a community—not just pro-life supporters or opponents.

## What Pro-Life in the Public Square is Not

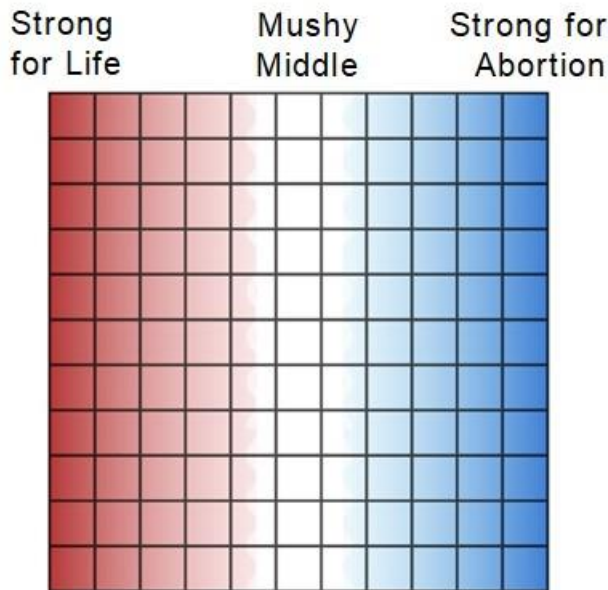
Before getting deeper into Pro-Life in the Public Square, let's consider what PLPS is not. Here is my categorization for the local level.

- politics
- sidewalk counseling
- pregnancy support and abortion recovery
- prayer vigils
- church involvement
- public square outreach

In my view, in this century the first four branches have experienced substantial growth and resources devoted. However, the last two have languished. (Regarding church involvement, see Eric Metaxas, [Letter to the American Church](#).) The mission of this website is to strengthen public square outreach ASAP.

## PLPS and the Public Sentiment Grid

Figure 1  
**Public Sentiment Grid**  
Equal Balance



Each small block represents  
1 person, or 1,000, etc.

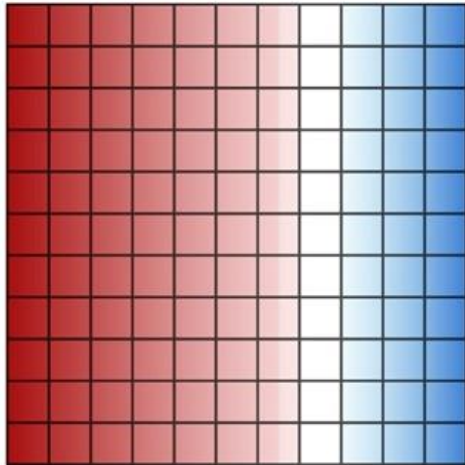
The grid shown in Figure 1 makes the central point about Pro-Life in the Public Square. The grid represents the population of a community, state, or nation. Each small square can represent one person, 100, 1,000, or whatever depending on population size. Three groups are depicted along a horizontal spectrum or continuum. Pro-life neighbors or citizens of the community are shown in red. The red rectangles show greater pro-life intensity. Of course, the dark blue squares are abortion supporters. The largest group is in the "mushy middle". These are the squares that are white, light red, and light blue. The challenge for PLPS is to effectively penetrate the entire grid to shift the voters in the pro-life direction.

## Shifting a Public Sentiment Grid

The distribution from red to blue is not fixed over time for any particular population. Figure 2 shows a more strongly pro-life population and Figure 3 is a highly pro-abortion population. These graphics make two important points. 1. For populations in different cities, states, or regions, the ranges may well be different. Cities in Mississippi cities would show a larger

**Figure 2**  
**Public Sentiment Grid**  
Stronger for Life

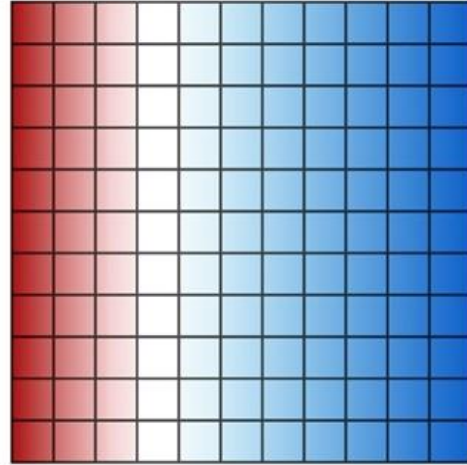
Strong for Life      Mushy Middle      Strong for Abortion



Each small block represents  
1 person, or 1,000, etc.

**Figure 3**  
**Public Sentiment Grid**  
Stronger for Abortion

Strong for Life      Mushy Middle      Strong for Abortion



Each small block represents  
1 person, or 1,000, etc.

area of red as in Figure 2. California cities would show a larger area of blue.

2. Regardless of current ranges in the grid, the challenge for the pro-life movement is to change hearts and minds to shift the grid in a red direction. Of course, abortion supporters strive to make the grid bluer.

Shifting the distribution of our fellow citizens is central to the pro-life/ pro-abortion battle. To move our community in the red direction, we must find ways to engage the mushy middle. Engaging mainly within the pro-life faithful will not change public sentiment. "Preaching to the pro-life choir" may be enjoyable and comfortable. However, the harvest of partial or full conversions will be limited.

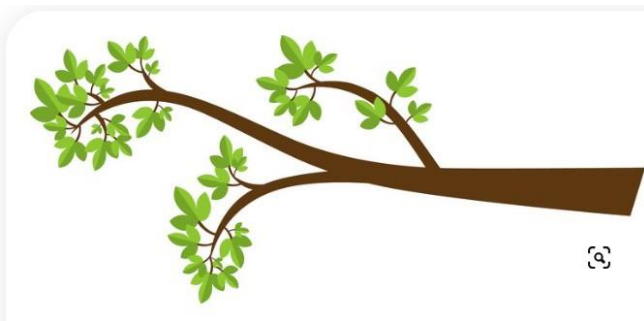
## Pro-Life Waco: The Foundation of PLPS

The new Pro-Life in the Public Square organization is an outgrowth of Pro-Life Waco, which started soon after Planned Parenthood Waco began baby killing in 1994. Our trajectory toward public square outreach began with the annual one-day sex education conference for Waco youths named "Nobody's Fool". The annual event was a proud creation of Planned Parenthood Waco. Leading up to the event, our outreach included yard signs, billboards, and newspaper editorials. On event day, dozens of pro-lifers protested and communicated at the Waco Convention Center site. From its top level of 700 children attending, Nobody's Fool declined continuously from a high mark of 700 youngsters until Planned Parenthood aborted it in 2013.

The biggest episode in Nobody's Fool battle was our 2004 boycott of cookie sales because of local Girl Scout promotion of Planned Parenthood Waco events. The boycott created "a tornado" in Central Texas. The controversy drew national attention. I

was interviewed on the Today Show, the 700 Club and more. In response to soaring pressures, the local Girl Scout council severed all ties with Planned Parenthood Waco.

Today, Pro-life Waco is the foundation under Pro-Life in the Public Square. We continue robust public square outreach in Waco. A very important feature for Pro-Life Waco is monthly outreach events. We deliver five PSO events each month. This includes the grandfather event of PSO, Life Chain. We go beyond once yearly, and are our holding signs in a prominent location every first Sunday. Overpass outreach above a major commuter artery is one Thursday each month. We have one event at Planned Parenthood Waco which remains open even with the Texas abortion ban. Unlike most abortion centers Planned Parenthood Waco is on a major artery in the public square. Pro-Life Waco's highest priority since March of 2023, has been challenges to CVS and Walgreens pharmacies. One event is at a double-barrel location with Walgreens on one side of the street and CVS on the other. Our most recent event is at a CVS pharmacy adjacent to Interstate 35 and Baylor University. In November, we pivot to CVS at Waco's Target store. The scheduling of these monthly events provides multiple opportunities in terms of day of the week for outreach, time of the day, and locations in the Waco public square.



### **Three sub-branches of Public Square Outreach**

The Pro-Life in the Public Square branch of the pro-life tree has three sub-branches:

1. Displaying fixed (and occasionally mobile) signs
2. Foot soldiers taking positions at advantageously located streets and overpasses to engage with signs, literature, and conversations
3. Fairs, festivals, and tabling.

Sub-branch #1 is available to every community. This includes yard signs, bus benches, and billboards. Some billboards may move such as a billboard truck or airplane-drawn banners. This arena can be an easy and inexpensive first step into public square outreach. You can easily purchase a couple dozen yard signs to display in your community. (PLPS is one source for you.) A church or church organization can take the lead to display one or more billboards. Small cities with a major highway passing through "Main Street" have tremendous untapped opportunities. One great example is Highway 287 from Fort Worth to Amarillo. Billboards have a long and continuing history in the pro-life movement. Check out Pro-Life Across America.

Sub-branch #2 is taking strategic positions to hold signs and also distribute literature and engage in conversation where possible. See the previous section for the five events Pro-Life Waco delivers each month. Nationally, Pro-Life Action League facilitates annual public square outreach events. Their website provides how-to guidance for creating effective events. The annual events Pro-Life Action League facilitates include: National Pro-Life Bridges Day, National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children, Peace in the Womb Christmas Caroling, and Way of the Cross for Victims of Abortion. Created Equal for another group that engages in dynamic public square outreach. A lot they do is outside their home base in Columbus, Ohio.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-branch is fairs, festivals, and tabling. The priority is literature distribution and personal conversation rather than holding signs. The classic example is county or state fairs. Pro-Life Waco had a 10'x20' booth at the 9-day Heart of Texas Fair for two decades. Unfortunately, fair management decided to limit space rentals to profit-seeking businesses. We do our best now to display at church and community festivals. The soft-to-the-touch baby models make an enduring impression on children. On college campuses, tabling is an effective outreach for Students for Life of America chapters. A well-placed table engages the broad cross-section of a campus community.

## **Public Square Outreach and Protest**

Is public square outreach synonymous with protest? No, it is not. A protest is a public square outreach. However, not all public square outreach events are protests. PLW's pharmacy outreach events clearly have a major element of protest. (They also include chemical abortion education.) However, our Life Chain, Overpass Outreach, and many others are not protests. When your organization gets involved in public square outreach, you have an array of action options.

## **Geography**

A keyword regarding the meaning of public square outreach is BROAD. I have emphasized the broad range of public sentiment: from pro-life to mushy middle and then pro-abortion. Another dimension of BROAD is geography. Within a city, broad engagement can be launched from many locations. Broad geographic engagement would involve cities of all sizes--not just big cities with abortion centers.

The current configuration of the pro-life movement is not nearly as broad in geography as it could and should be. With the movement's current focus on sidewalk counseling, pregnancy support, and prayer vigils, the main location for outreach is abortion centers. Other city locations offer outreach opportunities to touch hearts and minds. And abortion centers are concentrated in only a few big cities. Before the Texas abortion ban, all abortion centers were located in Dallas, Fort Worth, Waco, Austin, Houston, San Antonio, and El Paso. We need all cities in Texas and America on board defending life.

Let's expand the geographical footprint of the pro-life movement. Consider the opportunities throughout big cities and in thousands of small and mid-sized cities: yard signs, billboards, Life Chains, overpass outreach, pharmacy outreach/protest, protesting other abortion enablers, fairs, festivals, and more.

The pro-life movement would be stronger if we were in every city and throughout each city. Moreover, a small city may be able to influence people far beyond its city limits. Think of billboards at the edge of town with a highway running through the town. The small city of Childress, TX on Highway 287 can reach out to thousands of out-of-town travelers each week with inexpensive billboards.

## **The Importance of Monthly Outreach**

A local pro-life group will benefit from going beyond annual events and having activities every month. Reliance on annual events will not provide the continuity to sustain outreach. Annual events, such as Life Chain, a fair display booth, and attending a fundraising gala are valuable arrows for your quiver. However, it is important to be shooting arrows more frequently. As mentioned above, Pro-Life Waco Has five monthly events. In addition to monthly events, you may have sidewalk counseling and prayer vigils.

Another reason for action each month is to build up your communication links to swing into action for one-time ad-hoc events. In the summer of 2022, we had our most recent ad-hoc situation in Waco. A pro-abortion group urged the Waco City Council to attempt to enact an ordinance that would require the Waco police force to deprioritize enforcement of Texas abortion laws. After we learn about the move, we swung into action or organized a strong showing at the next city council meeting. Over 300 pro-

lifers showed up. Overflow rooms were required, and 45 life defenders spoke for up to three minutes. The press covered our initiative, and the ordinance received no further consideration. Without the foundation of monthly outreach, we could not have met the unwelcome challenge so strongly.

## **Demand Side and Supply Side**

I studied economics at the University of Texas at Austin and was a member of the economic faculty at Baylor University for over 3 decades. “Supply and Demand” is embedded in my brain and is lens for my view of the abortion battle. There is a market for abortion with a supply side and a demand side. Each is important and they are interrelated. The overall pro-life movement needs laborers in all sectors of the vineyard.

The demand side is propelled by the willingness or desire of moms, dads, families, and governments to pay for abortions. The supply side consisted of businesses willing and able to supply abortion to gain revenue and profit.

In the overall pro-life movement, we seek to restrict supply with regulations and bans on abortion providers. The political branch of the pro-life movement is hard at work diminishing the supply of abortion and trying to counter the abortion movement’s efforts to expand supply. The And Then There Were None ministry curtails supply by persuading and helping abortion workers leave the industry.

The Pro-Life in the Public Square branch works mostly through the demand side by changing hearts, mind, and souls. Sidewalk counseling pregnancy support branches also work for the demand side. The ministries inside and outside church walls are critically important

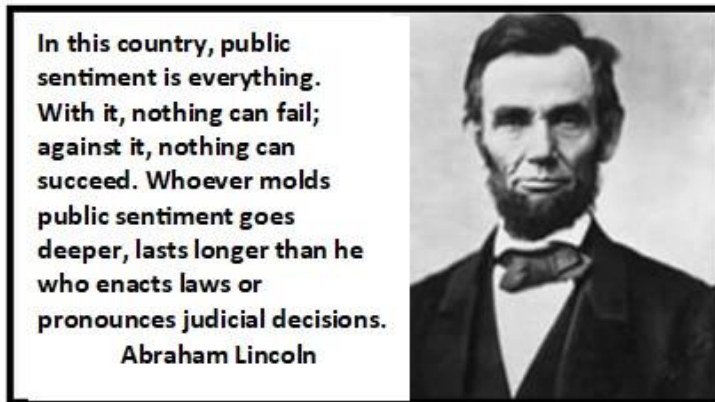
The latitude and opportunities for enacting supply-side constrains are influence by the culture and moral foundation of particular states and nations. What can be achieved by the political branch in California is much less than what may be achieved in Georgia. Laws and restraints on the supply of abortion are imperiled if not linked to commensurate cultural support. The soil of a pro-life culture must be tilled with impact by churches, public square outreach, sidewalk counseling and pregnancy support.

## **Upstream and Downstream**

Occasionally we encounter the phrases “upstream initiative” and “downstream initiative”. Before we relate these concepts to the public sentiment grid, consider a river that periodically floods a city at times of heavy rains. A downstream initiative would be deploying sandbags at the banks of the river to protect the city from flooding. An upstream initiative would be building a dam miles up the river to absorb water at times of heavy rain. Downstream solutions are often transitory. Upstream initiatives may permanently solve the problem.

Let’s consider downstream and upstream for an election with important pro-life implications. A downstream initiative for shifting the vote would be a voter turnout campaign involving calls and text messages to pro-lifers to encourage them to vote. This does not shift the distribution of voters on the public sentiment grid. Rather this improves election results within a fixed spectrum of public sentiment. In a close ballot, a get-out-the-vote campaign may deliver a victory.

Public square outreach is not directly political. However, PSO shifts the public opinion sentiment grid by changing hearts minds and souls. And this changes votes. Possibly the pro-life movement needs more focus on grid-changing public square outreach to improve political outcomes. Please ponder these words from Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln-Douglas debates:



## Review

Public Square Outreach is BROAD engagement with several dimensions.

- Broad in terms of the sentiment of community members. This is the big idea.
- Broad in terms of locations in your community.
- Broad in terms of the cities involved in your state and country.
- Broad in terms of days of the week and hours of the day of your events.
- Public Square outreach has three branches
- Some outreach events are protests. Others are not.
- A priority on monthly outreach events.
- Greater emphasis on upstream. The current pro-life movement focuses on downstream.
- Greater emphasis on the demand side. The current pro-life movement focuses on the supply side.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I am not claiming that public square outreach is the silver bullet for advancing pro-life and making abortion unthinkable. There is no silver bullet. Political action must be strong and wise. Sidewalk counseling, pregnancy care centers, and prayer vigils must continue their positive trajectories. However, we have entered troubled political waters in the post-Roe era. We must think and act outside the box to regain our footing. One key to revival is strengthening the public square outreach branch of the pro-life tree. I encourage your participation in making all of the pro-life tree stronger and abortion unthinkable in our communities.