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VIDEO RELEASE | Ernst Votes to Protect and Defend Innocent Life

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CONTACT: press@ernst.senate.gov**Ernst Votes to Protect and Defend Innocent Life**

Ernst, a member of the Senate Pro-Life Caucus, called on her colleagues to support two bills to recognize the inherent value of life.

WASHINGTON—U.S. Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA), a longtime and outspoken pro-life advocate, voted today in support of two important pieces of legislation to defend life. Ernst voted in favor of a bill which would provide commonsense protections for unborn children at 20 weeks after fertilization and a second [bill](#) that would simply require health care practitioners to provide the *same degree of care* to a baby who survives an abortion as they would any child born naturally premature at the same age.

Yesterday, Ernst joined fellow members of the Senate Pro-Life Caucus on the Senate floor to speak on the importance of both the [Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act](#) and the [Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act](#). In her speech, Ernst shared the remarkable story of Micah Pickering, a native of Newton, Iowa, who was born prematurely at 22 weeks of gestation—an age at which the [Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act](#) would prohibit abortion—and described how Micah, now 7 years-old, has gone on to lead a healthy and energetic life.



Click [here](#) or the image above to watch Senator Ernst's speech.

Ernst met with Micah and his family earlier in the day in her office.



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Senator Ernst's remarks are below:

"... First, I'd like to step back a little bit and take a moment to answer the one key, big picture question at the center of this debate and the debate that we have over life. And the basic question there: is life valuable?"

"And my answer to that question is that, absolutely. I see value in every single life, and we all have different ideas on how we measure the value of life, but I can boil it down a little bit.

"Some folks would say it's what a human being will bring to this world. Now what that is can be determined by different measures, but what impact does a person have?"

"Now, some of course will see celebrities, they'll see athletes, they'll see trailblazers and scientists and say, 'wow, they've made their mark on the world and they contribute so much. There is so much impact there.'

"But then I see it in every day common people at home in Iowa as well, and I even reflect upon folks like a friend of my daughters who grew up in our small community of Stanton and he has Down syndrome.

"And yet, he contributed so much and still does to this day in our home community. He's our hometown spirit coordinator at every football game and he's leading everyone in their cheers and supporting our hometown teams and this young man brings so much joy to everyone. I'd say that his life has made a huge impact on all that know him.

"And now we can think of the smallest among us as well. That baby in the womb, and how does that baby make an impact?"

"And as a mother, you know, I know that other fellow mothers they can relate to this as well. But that baby makes an impact even in the womb.

"The experience of pregnancy can change a woman forever— not just physically, but mentally and emotionally.

"Women that I talk to, they'll often comment on the amazing feeling and bond that they will have with that child that is growing in their womb. They experience that heart beat in the womb.

“And even to the effects that maybe we don’t like to reflect on, I remember the swollen ankles that I had on the last month of pregnancy. You know, no offense to Fred Flintstone, but I had Fred Flintstone feet!

“You know even things like that we can reflect on but the impact that having that child carried with me, it changed me forever. I know that other mothers know that.

“So, whether it’s from the beginning of a pregnancy of a healthy, healthy full term child; or whether it is a scary premature birth; or for some, the difficulty and life-ending decision to abort, the fact remains that that tiny human being carried within us has forever left a mark on their mother.

“And this truth spurs me on to fight even harder to protect the undeniable value that every human life has. Every human life has value.

“So, today, I stand with my pro-life colleagues and asking our pro-choice friends—many of whom are mothers and fathers themselves – to meet us in the middle.

“We may not be able to get on the same page when it comes to recognizing the inherent value that each of these lives holds, but surely we can agree that protecting our most vulnerable from painful death is a unifying and a humanitarian cause.

“So what I’d like to do is just tell you the story of my fellow Iowan, Micah Pickering.

“Now, Micah is joining us on the Hill this week, and I encourage all of my colleagues to take some time to meet this incredible boy – he will be on the Hill tomorrow.

“Now, when I first met Micah, he was just a couple years old and his family brought him into my office and I had this picture, I had just this picture in my office, and Micah, then two years old, he ran over to this picture –not knowing that was him – and he pointed at it and he said, ‘A baby!’ And, I started to cry and I said, ‘Yes, Micah, that is a baby.’

“Today, Micah is happy and he’s healthy, and he is seven years old. Now, he was born at 22 weeks, and that’s some of the babies we are talking about today. They’re born at 22 weeks. Now when Micah was born, he was literally the size of a bag of M&Ms—a tiny baby.

“Now, folks, can’t we all agree that this is a baby, and that babies like Micah, who survived a premature birth at, again, twenty-two weeks, and we are talking about those that survived, those that are at 20 weeks, which is more than halfway through a pregnancy—are deserving of protection? I agree to that.

“The only dividing factor between beautiful Micah and the more than ten thousand children that are aborted after twenty-two weeks gestation, which is what Micah was, the difference, the dividing factor is that...Micah was wanted, by his parents. His parents, Danielle and Clayton, saw his inherent value.

“The *Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act* is a measure that should meet the approval standard of my pro-choice friends because supporting this bill means giving all of the Micah Pickering of the world an equal fighting chance.

“The degree to which a child – of any age – is wanted does not diminish their value, and we have an obligation as lawmakers to protect their right to life.

“But if we cannot come together in support of a bill to protect viable babies from abortion at the point when they feel pain, then surely...surely a baby who survives an abortion attempt deserves the same degree of care as any other newborn.

“Folks, just think about it. These babies...their lives...they’ve already survived a horrific abortion attempt and been given a second chance at life.

“But without us putting the necessary protections in place, these precious babies can literally be left to die.

“And for those in the medical field who fail to care for these precious newborns, they need to be held accountable.

“Senator Sasse has helped lead the way in protecting these living babies with his *Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act* – a commonsense bill I proudly support.

“Given that we have an estimated 143 babies who died between 2003 and 2014 after surviving abortion, it’s clear that we need to strengthen the current law. These babies deserved the basic medical standard of care – regardless of how wanted they may have been.

“But I implore you to think about the issue of life in a new way; one that’s very simple.

“When you think about everyone you come into contact with – whether it’s your family, your friends, your coworkers, your children, your spouse, even yourself.

“Every single person was at one time a defenseless child in their mother’s womb.

“Every life – from the baby who has just been conceived to each and every one of you in this room tonight – has value.

“Whether you’re that star athlete, whether you are that scientist making new discoveries, whether you’re that hometown cheerleader, every life has value.

“And to my Senate colleagues: We’ve had this debate before, but I ask that you consider these bills with new eyes...focused on the inherent value of life.

“You have the opportunity to save lives, and I hope that you will join me in doing so.

“And again I thank the senator from Montana for raining this issue this evening and I’m proud to be a yes vote on both of these tremendous bills and I hope that we can get others to join us in that effort. Thank you, senator.”

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