News



Former Vice President Mike Pence addresses the Napa Institute conference July 27 in Napa, California. (NCR screenshot)



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Former Vice President Mike Pence urged hundreds of lay Catholics, clergy and bishops attending the annual summer conference organized by the conservative Napa Institute to keep building on what he described as historic pro-life victories made possible by Donald Trump's presidency and his own leadership in the White House.

"We not only appointed 300 conservatives to federal courts at every level, but we appointed three of the justices to the majority on the Supreme Court that sent *Roe* v. *Wade* to the ash heap of history where it belongs," the Republican presidential candidate said to sustained applause inside the Meritage Resort and Spa in Napa, California.

Pence celebrated what he called a "post-*Roe*" society and promised that if elected president he would only consider "pro-life Americans for cabinet positions." While he touted growing restrictions on abortion access in many states, Pence advocated for a "minimum national standard" restricting abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy that would apply to every state in the country.

"We are at a turning point, but we have only come to the end of the beginning," he cautioned. "Frankly, it may take us as long to restore the sanctity of life to the center of American law as it took us to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*, but I can judge from the enthusiasm and the passion and the faith of the people here at the Napa Institute that you will not rest, you will not relent."

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Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, an influential anti-abortion lobbying group, introduced Pence as a "man of sterling and tested character" and recalled working with the former Indiana congressman and Indiana governor "when he was a lone voice crying out against Planned Parenthood funding."

Pence, who was raised Catholic but has long identified as an evangelical Christian, called Dennenfelser, a Catholic, "the greatest champion of the pro-life cause in America today."

The Republican candidate, who has struggled to gain traction on the campaign trail and may not qualify to participate in the first GOP debate next month, railed against what he called schools teaching white students "to be ashamed of their own skin color" and denounced "a radical gender ideology that denies the difference between men and women." Pence disparaged President Joe Biden's support for transgender athletes in schools.

"Let me be clear on this. Participation in women's sports should be limited to gender at birth as a matter of fairness and common sense," he said.

As Republican-dominated state legislatures across the country target transgender rights, Pence also advocated in his speech for a national ban on gender transition procedures for anyone under the age of 18.

"We have to protect our kids," he said.



Napa Institute co-founder Timothy Busch gave former Vice President Mike Pence an award to honor his commitment to pro-life causes at the Napa Institute summer conference July 27. (NCR screenshot)

Pence told conference attendees to help build a movement to reclaim faith and traditional values. "Men and women of the Napa Institute, you are the answer for America, not elected officials or conservative causes. They all follow your lead," Pence said.

"I encourage you today to embrace the opportunity, be inspired and remember those who have gone before you," he said. "When I look at the influential men and women in this room I have to tell you, don't underestimate the importance of your voice on behalf of your faith and your values."

At the end of Pence's 35-minute speech, Napa Institute co-founder Timothy Busch gave Pence an award to honor his commitment to pro-life causes.

More than 800 people are attending the four-day Napa conference this year, a record in its 13-year history, according to organizers. The theme of this year's gathering, which cost $2,800 a ticket for non-clergy, is "What We Need Now: Renewing God's Presence in Our Lives, in our Church, and in Our Culture."

The conference agenda includes keynote speakers, panel discussions, wine tastings, evening cigar receptions, a cooking class and a Eucharistic procession. Bishops participating in the conference include Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, one of the most vocal proponents of barring President Joe Biden and Rep. Nancy Pelosi from receiving Communion because they support abortion rights.