News



U.S. President Donald Trump signs an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House, in Washington, Jan. 23, 2025. Trump signed an executive order Feb. 19, to develop policy recommendations to expand access to and affordability of in vitro fertilization. (OSV News/Reuters/Carlos Barria)

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President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that aims to expand access to in vitro fertilization, or IVF, a practice the Catholic Church warns is enormously destructive to embryonic human life.

A form of artificial reproductive technology, IVF unites a woman's eggs and a man's sperm outside of their respective bodies in a laboratory setting, with one or more embryonic children selected for implantation in the woman's uterus, and the remaining embryonic children either destroyed or frozen indefinitely.

Trump's Feb. 18 executive order "directs policy recommendations to protect IVF access and aggressively reduce out-of-pocket and health plan costs for such treatments," according to a statement issued that same day by the White House.

Costs for IVF, which are "often not fully covered by health insurance," can range "from $12,000 to $25,000 per cycle" and "multiple cycles may be needed to get pregnant," said the White House in its statement.

The executive order delivers on "promises for American families" made by Trump, while seeking to address declining fertility rates in the U.S., said the White House.

That drop is part of a global downturn in fertility rates, with 2024 rates at 2.2 births per woman, down from approximately 5 in the 1960s and 3.3 in 1990, according to the United Nations' World Fertility Report 2024.

The White House statement quoted Trump as saying, "We want more babies, to put it very nicely."

However pro-family demographers put cold water on an IVF policy leading to a baby boom when Trump floated the idea on the 2024 campaign trail.

Lyman Stone, senior fellow and director of the Pronatalism Initiative at the Institute for Family Studies told OSV News in September that people tend to delay fertility

with more reproductive technology options.

"So you freeze your eggs when you're 31, and you say, 'Well, I don't need to be in any particular rush, because at the end of the day, I've got all the time in the world,'" he said. But given some of the inherent difficulties in births to older mothers, that's not always true, meaning "these two factors more or less cancel out."

"So the net result is that there are no extra babies," he said.

IVF treatments are opposed by the Catholic Church because they frequently involve the destruction of human embryos, in addition to other ethical and moral issues.

Out of more than 413,000 artificial reproductive technology cycles recorded in 2021, only 112,088 resulted in pregnancy. Of those, only 97,128 babies were successfully born, according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

Multiple embryos are typically created for use in an IVF cycle, so the number of human embryos currently created each year by IVF in the U.S. runs into the hundreds of thousands — with the majority typically lost through what fertility clinics on their websites explain as "IVF attrition."

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Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia — who in November 2024 completed his three-year term as chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities — addressed IVF in his Jan. 22 pastoral letter, "The Christian Family, In Vitro Fertilization and Heroic Witness to True Love."

Citing the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council, papal writings, Catholic bioethicists and journalistic coverage of the IVF industry, while also providing an array of pastoral resources for couples struggling with infertility, Burbidge warned that IVF poses both an "obvious" and "subtle" threat to human dignity.

He said those threats include the eugenic destruction of millions of embryonic children, the unraveling of the integral bond between childbearing and marital love, the erosion of a child's right to natural parents, and dangers to health, safety and

religious liberty.

In a Feb. 19 statement, Burbidge described Trump's executive order as a "disappointing and unnecessary action" that is "incompatible with the president's evident support for the good of human life and his desire to encourage family formation."

The order is "likely to unjustly promote IVF in a way that will result in the abandonment or death of millions of embryonic human persons," said Burbidge in his statement.

In addition, the expansion of IVF access stands to "involve all taxpayers with a serious moral injustice, provide federal subsidies for already lucrative IVF businesses, and ignore the risks to parents and children of America's broadly unregulated IVF industry," he said.

Some pro-life advocacy leaders have begun speaking out against Trump's IVF executive order. Live Action president Lila Rose, a Catholic, called the proposal "heartbreaking" and said "IVF is NOT pro-life" in social media postings Feb. 18.

"IVF turns children into a product to be created, sold, and discarded — violating their basic human rights," she said.

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.