

# ACTION NEWS

February 2023

Pro-Life Action League 314 N. Lake St. Ste. 4 Aurora, IL 60506

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## League to Pharmacies: Stay out of Abortion Biz!

by Matt Yonke

Just before Christmas last year, as pro-lifers were preparing to celebrate the birth of Our Lord, the Biden Administration announced that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would be changing the rules governing the distribution of mifepristone, the abortion drug commonly known as RU-486, allowing it to be sold at pharmacies with a prescription, rather than the previous guidance which required the pills to be distributed by a medical provider at their office.

This was the latest step in a string of changes the Biden administration has made surrounding medication abortion, including allowing mifepristone to be prescribed online via telemedicine and allowing the pills to be delivered by mail—two policies initiated during the COVID crisis, and later made permanent.

Mifepristone is one part of a two-drug cocktail used for the medication abortion procedure, the other being misoprostol. This drug cocktail now accounts for over half of all abortions in the United States. For more details

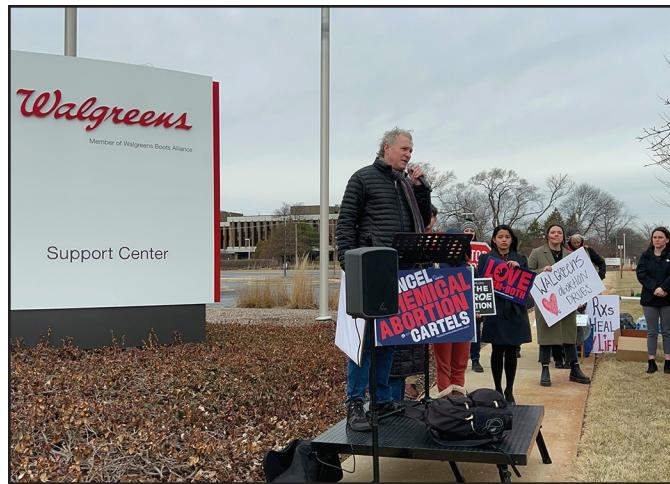


Photo by Matt Yonke  
League executive Director Eric Scheidler talks to the crowd at the St. Valentine's Day protest at Walgreens national headquarters in Deerfield, IL.

on how medication abortion works, see page 3.

This latest rule change officially took effect on January 3, 2023, and shortly thereafter national pharmacy chains Walgreens and CVS announced that they would seek licenses to dispense the abortion drugs at their pharmacies, with Rite Aid following suit shortly thereafter. This meant that the three largest US pharmacy chains—with over 20,000 retail stores between them—would be getting into the abortion business, effectively placing new abortion facilities on street corners all across America.

### League Calls for Nationwide Protest

In response to this massive expansion of medication abortion, our friends at the Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising (PAAU) reached out to us for collaboration. We came to an immediate agreement that a nationwide protest was called for, and scheduled one for Saturday, February 4.

PAAU launched a website called [StopAbortionRX.com](http://StopAbortionRX.com) where people could sign up to

host a protest, and offered to provide local leaders with signs and banners they designed. The League mobilized our massive army of local pro-life leaders and offered our decades of expertise on protest organization and logistics as this effort got underway.

On February 4, the League protested at one of the many Walgreens stores in our headquarters city of Aurora, Illinois, while over 100 other groups protested at Walgreens, CVS, and Rite Aid stores across the country. Our protest featured signs showing babies in the womb at seven and eight weeks of life—the stage

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## League to Pharmacies: Stay out of Abortion Biz!

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at which unborn children are killed by medication abortion—along with signs reading “Walgreens: Say NO to Abortion Pills.”

The protests made a big splash and caught national media attention, and many on the ground who took our literature or spoke with us outside Walgreens were horrified to find that their local pharmacy could soon be selling abortion drugs.

### Opposition continues on Valentine’s Day

After the initial protest, pro-lifers were eager to keep the heat on these pharmacy chains and the League was ready to put them to work. In another productive collaboration, we joined forces with Students for Life of America (SFLA) in calling for protests on Valentine’s Day, Tuesday, February 14.

Here in Illinois, we hosted a protest together with SFLA outside Walgreens’ corporate headquarters in Deerfield, Illinois. SFLA gathered a bevy of speakers, including the League’s Eric Scheidler and Mary



Photo by Matt Yonke

Ron Bloom holds our giant St. Valentine’s Day card up against the League van as a volunteer adds her signature

Kate Zander of Illinois Right to Life. The League provided the “boots on the ground” with dozens of protesters, as well as our seven- and eight-week fetus images with smaller signs affixed to them reading, “Walgreens: Don’t Break Our Hearts.”

We also brought a very large, novelty sized Valentine’s Day card addressed to Walgreens CEO Roz Brewer. The outside of the colorful card read, “Hey Walgreens! It’s Valentine’s Day ...” and the inside, “... don’t break our hearts! Drop your plans to sell abortion drugs!” The inside featured traditional pastel candy hearts with images of fetuses on them. League staff and dozens of volunteers signed the card.

### Walgreens Shuts Down for Protest

It was our intention to deliver the card to Brewer, or at least leave it with a company receptionist for her, but we were unable to do so because it turned out that Walgreens had shut down their entire campus for the day! An employee who lived nearby passed by the protest and told us they had emailed all their employees the week before telling them to stay home the day of our protest. We also observed that brand new “No Trespassing” signs had just been installed at the parking lot entrance, with the price stickers still attached!

Eric gathered a group of protesters to approach the building and see if anyone would receive our card, but we were waylaid by Walgreens’ private security who insisted that we leave their property. Eric asked if the security guards would deliver the card for us, but they refused and eventually called for a nearby police officer who escorted the pro-life crowd from the property.



Photo by Eric J. Scheidler

Joanie Ciesisca and Vince Heaton hold signs outside the Walgreens at Lake and Illinois in Aurora, IL

Since they were too scared of our peaceful protest to receive a simple Valentine’s day card, we sent the card to Brewer via UPS the following day. Here’s hoping she received it!

We also noticed when we arrived that Deerfield police had put up “No Parking by Police Order” signs on the public parking areas on about half of the streets in the surrounding neighborhood where we had instructed people to park for the protest. A subsequent Freedom of Information Act request revealed extensive collaboration between the Deerfield police and Walgreens in advance of the protest. The League is currently exploring whether this action was a violation of our civil rights requiring legal action.

For those who couldn’t attend a Valentine’s Day protest but still wanted to take action, PAAU designed flyers that pro-lifers could print out and distribute or place on car windshields at Walgreens, CVS, and Rite Aid stores. We emailed the flyer to our supporters across the country.

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# 50th March for Life Celebrates Dobbs Victory

by Ann Scheidler

In January of last year, as pro-lifers gathered for the 49th annual March for Life in Washington D.C., many of us wondered, “Is this the last March for Life?” (see February 2022 *Action News*). The answer was “No.” *Dobbs v. Jackson* came down from the Supreme Court on June 24, 2022, and March for Life announced that the 50th annual March would be a celebration of the victory we had all worked towards for the past five decades.

Several members of the Pro-Life Action League family headed to DC to join the celebration and to pray for an expansion of pro-life laws and policies across America. Eric Scheidler and his wife April, John Jansen and his son Jose, Matt Yonke and his son Peter, my granddaughter Hope Miller, and I arrived in the nation’s capitol on Thursday, January 19, and headed straight to the USCCB Mass for pro-life leaders at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America.

## Bishop Burbidge’s Challenge

Bishop Michael Francis Burbidge of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia and Chairman of the Pro-Life Activities Committee of the USCCB was the celebrant. His homily focused on Jesus as a leader who noticed the seemingly insignificant details of those who approached him. He urged us, as pro-life leaders, to follow Jesus’ example: to take notice of the needs of pregnant women and of our society, and to try to meet them. The reception following the Mass was an opportunity to

greet old friends and to get acquainted with a few new ones.

The next event of the day was the Thomas More Society reception at a lovely home in Washington. The attorneys representing various pro-life activists updated us on some of the details of the cases, and the legal bases for their defenses.



Photo by Eric J. Scheidler  
Eric and April Scheidler at the March for Life Rally at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., as The Chosen actor Jonathan Roumie takes the stage

Later that evening, Hope was featured at the Law of Life Summit, an annual event organized by Royce Hood at the Renaissance Hotel, the headquarters of the March for Life conference. Hope announced the formation of her new pro-life organization, Simply Pro-life, which aims to provide young people with simple pro-life activities they can put into action right away.

On Friday, January 20, the Pro-life Action League group joined hundreds of thousands of pro-lifers from across the country at the Rally and March for Life. This year the march route took us past the U.S. Capitol to emphasize the shift in focus to pro-

life legislation, after years of calling on the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe*—which of course it had done with the *Dobbs* decision.

## Ann and Eric in the News

That morning, Eric was featured in an extensive *New York Times* cover story on the March for Life, including exclusive coverage of a Joint Statement for a Post *Roe* Future that Eric had co-authored (see story, page 4). On the same day, Ann Scheidler was featured in the *Washington Post* on the ecumenical flavor of the pro-life movement.

That evening, Eric, April, Hope and I attended the Rose Dinner, the annual celebration of life and fellowship hosted by March for Life. The keynote speaker was Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus in the popular streaming series *The Chosen*, a dramatization of the Gospel as seen from the perspective of the apostles He had chosen. Roumie talked about his hesitancy to go public with his pro-life views, and his ultimate decision: “Jesus made me do it.”

Hope and I dedicated Saturday to a bit of tourism in D.C., including a visit to the National Archives, where we saw the original Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and to the Library of Congress, which houses Thomas Jefferson’s library. Both of these sites remind us of the lofty aspirations of our nation’s founders, and our role as pro-life activists in fighting to uphold those values and secure them for future generations.

# League Promulgates Bold “Joint Statement for a Post-Roe Future”

by Eric J. Scheidler

The Pro-Life Action League is at the forefront of a new movement to build on the historic victory of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*—the Supreme Court ruling that overturned *Roe v. Wade* last year—by calling for new pro-family policies to reduce the social and economic pressures pushing so many women towards abortion. On January 20, the day of the March for Life, a “Joint Statement for a Post-Roe Future,” of which I am a co-author, was published at [PostRoeFuture.com](https://PostRoeFuture.com) and highlighted as an exclusive in a *New York Times* cover story.

## Gang of Four Drafts Statement

The Joint Statement grew from a series of discussions I held with three other pro-life leaders: Josh Brahm of the Equal Rights Institute, Jonathon Van Maren of the Canadian Centre for Bioethical Reform, and Charlie Camosey of Creighton University. Josh and Jonathon are both old friends of mine, and while Josh is politically to the center-left and Jonathon to the center-right, I found that both of them were saying some of the same things about how to move forward saving babies from abortion after the fall of Roe. Jonathon then introduced me to Charlie, whose 2016 book *Beyond the Abortion Wars* had impressed me, and our quartet took to Zoom to hash out some ideas.

Our “Gang of Four” discussed the phenomenon of “unwanted abortion”—the fact that half or more of

all abortions are the result of outside pressure on women. We pondered the curious survey finding that poor women are substantially more pro-life than rich women. We examined the policies that the nations of Hungary and Israel have put in place to encourage family formation and push back against demographic decline. And, under Jonathon’s leadership, we considered what it really means to be “conservative”—exactly what are we trying to conserve?

The result was our Joint Statement, hammered out over several months of drafting and discussion. Once we finalized the language, we circulated the Statement among a broad group of pro-life leaders, scholars, and journalists, garnering broad support for our policy goals.

## Common Ground and Common Sense

Our Gang of Four was careful to set general policy goals, rather than to endorse specific legislation, in order to allow the widest possible room for creative solutions that could earn support from across the political spectrum—including both the traditional conservatives that are so often associated with the public face of the pro-life movement, as well as the

growing numbers of pro-lifers who describe themselves as liberal or even progressive.

We were also careful to acknowledge priorities like incentivizing work over government dependency, encouraging at-home parenting, and allocating taxpayer dollars responsibly. That said, while budget-neutral

solutions are possible for much of what we’re calling for, we recognize that private charity simply cannot provide all of the support families need in a post-Roe world, with abortions banned or limited in some states, while being aggressively promoted and expanded in others.

While most of those whom we invited to sign the Joint

Statement did so with enthusiasm, there were some who thought we were going too far—and others, not far enough. I considered this a good sign that we had struck a reasonable “middle way” forward in supporting families and reducing abortion pressure.

## Signs of the Times

Another sign that the Joint Statement is pointing us in the right direction comes from the recent actions of Republican governors. On February 3,

*“We have to love Mississippi moms. We have to support them. And—in a post-Dobbs world—we may even have to be willing to do things that make us ‘philosophically uncomfortable.’”*

— MISSISSIPPI GOV.

TATE REEVES

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## League's "Joint Statement"

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Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy called for the expansion of Medicaid coverage for new mothers from 60 to 360 days, saying he wants to make Alaska “the most pro-life state in the country.” And on February 27, Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves posted on Twitter that he wants to make permanent a Covid-era expansion of Medicaid for new mothers and babies to a full year post-partum.

Commenting on Mississippi's near-total abortion ban, enacted after the *Dobbs* ruling, Reeves wrote, “I believe that to be a beautiful thing.” But he went on: “I also believe that added stress will be felt by more Mississippi moms. We have to love them. We have to support them.” Addressing the likelihood of opposition from some conservative legislators in the state, Tate said that in a “post-Dobbs world,” pro-life legislators must “be willing to do things that make us ‘philosophically uncomfortable.’”

Meanwhile, Texas state legislator Bryan Slaton has introduced a bill to provide property tax relief for families for each additional child; a family with ten children would pay no property tax at all. And Ohio Sen. J.D. Vance is proposing making childbirth free. It's gratifying to see the goals of the Joint Statement being echoed by Republican leaders in this way!

The list of signers of the Joint Statement has grown to nearly 1,000, and includes some of the best-known names in the pro-life movement, like **Abby Johnson** (And Then There Were None), **Lila Rose** (Live Action), **Kristan Hawkins** (Students for Life of America), and **Catherine Foster** (Americans United for Life). I invite you to read this Joint Statement with an open mind, and consider adding your name, too.

## JOINT STATEMENT FOR A POST-ROE FUTURE

### *It's time for the pro-life movement to embrace bold, new pro-family policies.*

With the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the pro-life movement finally has the opportunity to extend legal protection to unborn children, and legislatures in several states have already begun to do this. But we believe limiting or even banning abortion is not enough.

We are pro-life conservatives, moderates, and liberals united in our conviction that every human life has value—including the lives of both the unborn child and that child's mother. We believe that our society should prioritize the needs of both, and that ultimately this can only be achieved by significant changes in public policy.

The pro-life movement has always recognized the importance of supporting women facing untimely pregnancies, with millions donated over the years to a vast national network of pro-life pregnancy centers. But in the new landscape emerging after *Roe*, with some states limiting abortion while others expand their abortion license, support from non-profits will not be enough.

State and federal governments must take action to eliminate or reduce the significant economic and social pressures that we know drive women to seek abortion in the first place.

Among the policies that should be broadly embraced by the pro-life movement and advanced by elected officials are:

- Accessible and **affordable healthcare** for parents and children—including expanding Medicaid funding for prenatal care, delivery, and postpartum expenses—to reduce the financial barriers to welcoming a new child.
- Expanded **child tax credits** that promote family formation and lift children out of poverty;
- **Paid parental leave** that ensures every infant can receive the close attention and nurturing care they need from their mothers and fathers in the early months of life;
- Flexible work hours to enable families to establish a tranquil home life, with predictable work schedules and better options for meaningful part-time employment;
- **Affordable childcare** options that support working parents, without disincentivizing the choice to raise young children at home that many families say they would prefer;
- Fully enforce existing **prenatal child support** laws while seeking effective new ways to demand that all men take responsibility for children they father.

We realize that not every government has the fiscal capacity to enact every measure that might reduce abortion, and that these policies must be carefully crafted to empower families without disincentivizing work or promoting unhealthy dependence on government.

Nevertheless, meeting the needs of mothers and children at this historic moment is too important for us not to try bold, new, transformative policies, find out what really works, and continue to reform our society on behalf of the American family.

See the full list of signers and add your name at [PostRoeFuture.com](https://PostRoeFuture.com).



# League Saves Baby in Far-Away Pakistan

by John Jansen

On March 20, 2022, the Pro-Life Action League received an email from a young woman in Pakistan named Natasha. The subject line read: “Save me and unborn child.”

Natasha was 15 weeks pregnant—and terrified. An unmarried woman, she had been assaulted by the well-connected family of her baby’s father and feared further persecution or even being put to death on a false blasphemy charge. The baby’s father “constantly” tried forcing her to have an abortion, but she steadfastly refused, explaining in her email: “I am a practicing Catholic and I can’t abort my child.”

Natasha had asked the police and various NGOs for help but received no response. The Archdiocese of Karachi offered some assistance but was unable to provide legal help—hence her desperate email to us.

While the Pro-Life Action League does not have any connections of our



Photo courtesy of Natasha N. Natasha and her three-month old daughter Ariana on Christmas Day 2022

own in Pakistan, I suspected that our friends at Alliance Defending Freedom International (ADFI) might, so I reached out to them and forwarded Natasha’s email. ADFI then set up a Zoom with Natasha and one of their allied attorneys in Pakistan a few days later. The last I had heard from Natasha was March 30 of last year—ten days after she had initially

written to us—when she asked us to keep in our prayers, which I assured her we would.

## “You Saved My Daughter and Me”

Fast forward eleven months to February of this year, when Nathasha wrote to us with an update:

*I don’t know if you remember me, but you changed my life. You saved my daughter and me; maybe that was God’s way of helping me through you. I want to take a moment out of my life and thank you for everything you have done. You got me the legal help needed, even though I never asked it, and I never knew that my current lawyers at that time had other plans and motives. Indeed, the Almighty works in wonders... We settled outside the court, and {the child’s father} agreed to give a legal name to my daughter. (I named her Ariana.)*

We received Natasha’s message at 3:39 a.m. CT on February 22—Ash Wednesday—making it the very first email we received in Lent. To God be the glory for such an edifying start to this most holy season!

## Take the League’s 2023 Lenten Prayer Challenge!

*To take the Pro-Life Action League’s 2023 Lenten Prayer Challenge, please pray this prayer every day, and—if you are able—fast from one meal each week for the following intentions:*

### Heavenly Father,

We ask you this day to protect all of those who are at work out on the front lines of the pro-life movement.

Encourage our sidewalk counselors to continue their compassionate outreach during these difficult times. Inspire them with the right words to say, and open the ears of abortion-bound mothers to hear them.

Embolden our street activists to hold their ground in the face of angry counter-protesters. Let their message be heard, so that hearts and minds will be changed on abortion.

Reassure all those working in pro-life pregnancy centers and dispel all their fears. Let Your love shine through them as they serve vulnerable women in Your name.

O Lord, send Your spirit of peace to all those who are working on the front lines to save the lives of Your precious unborn children.

**We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.**

## League Crashes Planned Parenthood Chicago Party



Photo by Eric J. Scheidler

On February 2, a dozen Pro-Life Action League staff and volunteers held a chilly protest outside a Planned Parenthood fundraiser at Morgan Manufacturing on Chicago’s near west side.

## League to Pharmacies: Stay out of Abortion Biz!

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### Keeping the Pressure On

In the days since then, we've continued to keep the pressure on these pharmacy chains. The League has encouraged pro-lifers to boycott these chains and take their business to locally owned pharmacies, and to write letters to pharmacists and store managers decrying the decision to sell abortion drugs. Plans are in the works for a pro-life action at CVS headquarters in Rhode Island, along with ongoing local store protests like the one the League is hosting in early March at both a CVS and a Walgreens on opposite corners of one intersection here in Aurora, Illinois.

The League is also preparing a flyer about medication abortion, something the pro-life movement desperately needs to educate the public as these pills have become the most prevalent form of abortion. We are meeting with a graphic designer shortly to get that flyer out to the public as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, a lawsuit currently moving through the federal courts in Texas from our friends at Alliance Defending Freedom is challenging the legality of the FDA's approval of mifepristone back in 2000. The suit claims that the drug was not properly investigated for safety as the law requires. If successful, this lawsuit would dramatically change the landscape of abortion in the U.S.

We didn't expect to spend so much time and effort this year on abortion pills in neighborhood pharmacies, but that's where the Biden Administration picked a fight. The League excels at responding quickly and effectively to emerging crises like this—a new battle that is sure to continue with increasing intensity in the months to come.

# What Is Medication Abortion?

by John Jansen

When you see the term “medication abortion” in the news, it most often refers to a combination of two drugs: mifepristone and misoprostol.

Mifepristone (a.k.a. RU-486) was developed in France as an alternative to surgical abortion and first licensed in France and China in 1988. Its use spread to other European countries in the 1990s and was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2000. Until 2019, mifepristone was manufactured in the U.S. solely by Danco Laboratories, a company started by The Population Council explicitly to produce the abortion pill. Since 2019, a generic version of mifepristone has been manufactured by GenBioPro.

Mifepristone was first approved for use up to 49 days following the date of a woman's last menstrual period (LMP). That number has since been expanded to 70 days LMP, although many abortionists frequently administer it off label to women past that point. The compound works by blocking the pregnant mother's body from producing progesterone, effectively starving the embryo. After a woman takes mifepristone, she then takes the other drug, misoprostol, up to 48 hours later. Misoprostol (trade name Cytotec), causes contractions that physically expel the embryo's remains from the woman's body.

### “Safer than Tylenol”?

Abortion advocates frequently parrot the talking point that medication abortion is “safer than Tylenol.” But even a 2021 study commissioned by the pro-abortion Society of Family Planning found that women who underwent medication abortions required hospital and urgent care visits at a rate 107 times higher than for Tylenol.

When the FDA first approved mifepristone, the agency stipulated that any doctor providing it must sign an agreement with Danco Laboratories to report “all serious adverse events associated with its use.” But if you suspect that abortion providers might not hold up their end of the bargain, you'd be right.

The late Sue Thayer, a former Planned Parenthood center manager, told the League in 2014: “Planned Parenthood will not report complications. They have said repeatedly that there has never been a single complaint from webcam (medication/chemical) abortions. I know this is simply not true!” Instead, Planned Parenthood's policy is to tell women to go to the emergency room and say nothing about the abortion pill. In Thayer's words: “According to my former boss, ‘It's no different than a miscarriage and a doctor does not need to know.’”

### Abortion pill reversal is possible

What if a woman takes mifepristone and immediately regrets it? The good news is that it is still sometimes possible to save her baby's life. If she has not yet taken misoprostol, she can contact the Abortion Pill Rescue Network to be connected with a local medical provider who can begin a treatment regimen consisting of large doses of progesterone to counteract the effects of mifepristone. Over 4,000 babies have been born in the U.S. after their mothers underwent abortion reversal.

Since the year 2000, medication abortion has consistently grown more pervasive, and now accounts for more than half of all abortions in the United States. It is vital for pro-lifers to understand this growing menace and be able to share the truth about its dangers—and the possibility that sometimes its effects can be reversed and a life saved.





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*February 2023*

# **ACTION NEWS SPECIAL REPORT**

## **League to Pharmacies: Stay out of Abortion Biz! ... AND MORE!**

### **On the Front Lines with the Pro-Life Action League**

**1-08** Hope Miller mans League table at Ss. Peter & Paul Pro-Life Night, Cary, IL



Photo courtesy of Hope Miller

**1-11** Work begins on the new St. Joseph Chapel at League HQ in Aurora, IL



Photo by Matt Yonke

**1-29** Eric Scheidler speaks at Compass Church's Naperville, IL campus



Photo by Rich Brennan

**2-14** Eric at Relevant Radio's Lincolnshire, IL studios for Drew Mariani interview



Photo by Eric Scheidler

**2-22** League's Jean Crocco visits with activist John Pisciotta in Waco, TX



Photo courtesy of Frances Crocco

**2-26** Ann Scheidler addresses the 2023 SpeakOut Illinois Conference



Photo by John Jansen