

In a surprising twist, two conservative groups that oppose abortion rights have thrown their support behind President-elect Donald Trump's pick of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to head the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This endorsement comes despite sharp criticism from former Vice President Mike Pence, who warned that Kennedy's appointment could undermine the pro-life agenda.

Kennedy, a controversial figure with a history of shifting positions on abortion, would oversee agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. His potential confirmation has reignited debate within conservative circles, as these agencies wield significant influence over abortion access nationwide.

## Pence's Objections and Calls for Rejection

On Friday, Pence voiced his strong opposition, labeling Kennedy "the most pro-abortion Republican-appointed secretary of HHS in modern history." In a statement released by Advancing American Freedom, Pence urged Senate Republicans to block the nomination, claiming it would betray the millions of Americans who value the sanctity of life.

"On behalf of tens of millions of pro-life Americans, I respectfully urge Senate Republicans to reject this nomination and give the American people a leader who will respect the sanctity of life," Pence said.

## Support from Conservative Allies

Despite Pence's objections, some conservative allies have dismissed his concerns. Terry Schilling, president of the American Principles Project, expressed confidence in Kennedy's commitment to Trump's agenda, which leaves abortion policies largely to the states.

“RFK Jr. is going to serve at the pleasure of the president,” Schilling said, emphasizing Trump’s clear stance against federal intervention in abortion. Schilling’s organization, which advocates for a range of conservative social policies, has pledged its support for Kennedy, highlighting his shared views on issues like gender-affirming care for minors.

Another conservative group, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, voiced measured concern about Kennedy but remained optimistic about the policies established during Trump’s first term. Marjorie Dannenfelser, the group’s president, acknowledged the importance of a pro-life HHS secretary but hinted that Trump’s baseline policies would remain intact regardless of Kennedy’s appointment.

## Navigating a Divided Movement

Americans United for Life (AUL), a leading anti-abortion group, struck a cautious tone. While optimistic about working with Kennedy, AUL CEO John Mize noted the need for further education on the harmful effects of abortion. Mize pointed to Kennedy’s fluctuating stance, including his recent support for a federal abortion ban—a position his campaign later walked back.

Mize also suggested specific actions Kennedy could take to solidify his pro-life credentials, such as reinstating FDA restrictions on the abortion pill mifepristone, which is now widely available via telehealth. In 2023, medication abortions accounted for more than 60% of all abortions in the U.S.

## Trump’s Confidence in Kennedy

Trump remains steadfast in his choice, praising Kennedy’s “Make America Healthy Again” agenda. During the campaign, Trump expressed confidence in Kennedy’s ability to tackle

public health issues, including women's health and environmental concerns.

"Do whatever you want. You just go ahead. Work on pesticides, work on making women's health," Trump said earlier this month, underscoring his trust in Kennedy's leadership.

## The Road Ahead

While Kennedy's nomination faces opposition from key conservative figures, his supporters believe he can bridge the gap between health policy reform and the pro-life movement. Whether the Senate will confirm Kennedy remains to be seen, but the debate underscores the ongoing tension within the Republican Party as it navigates the evolving landscape of abortion policy in America.