



**Diocesan Comment**  
**October 19, 2011**  
**Personhood Initiative**

In April 2009, Bishop Joseph Latino sent a letter to all clergy in the Diocese addressing the petitioning phase of Initiative 26. In this letter Bishop called Personhood Mississippi "a noble initiative." However, he went on to articulate to clergy and parish leaders, "I join with Catholic Bishops in several other states in not endorsing Personhood petitions to be circulated in our Catholic parishes. We have committed ourselves to working for a federal amendment and feel the push for a state amendment could ultimately harm our efforts to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*."

Now that we are in the post-petition phase of Initiative 26, Bishop Latino has stated the following.

"Although the Diocese of Jackson is not taking a position of public support for this amendment, individual Catholics, having formed their consciences, may vote as they so choose. The Roman Catholic Church and her bishops are unequivocally pro-life; however, we do not always publicly support every initiative that comes before us in the name of pro-life."

The Diocese is not taking a position against Initiative 26. It is simply choosing to allow individual Catholics to make their own choice on the Initiative based on a formed conscience.

Bishop Latino and the Diocese have maintained "the push for a state amendment could ultimately harm our efforts to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*."

Bishop Latino expressed that he appreciates informed dialogue regarding Initiative 26 and asks that parishioners and constituents understand and articulate his and the Diocese's actual response to the issue as not taking position against Initiative 26. Rather, Bishop urges individual Catholics to form their consciences, educate themselves on the amendment and "vote as they so choose."

###