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News on the Abortion Front: It's Headline Friday

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Partial Victory on the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban

Public support for abortion has been falling for years, as technological advances and moral arguments are closing the gap in the nation's conscience. A ban on the atrocious partial-birth abortion procedure would be the first real step toward a reversal of the Culture of Death that has been institutionalized in America since the Roe v. Wade decision was handed down in 1973.

This week, Congress took concrete steps toward the passage of a ban on partial-birth abortions when a House-Senate conference committee agreed on a final version of the legislation and when the House of Representatives passed this bill by a vote of 281-142.

The Senate is scheduled to take up the bill as early as today, and passage is expected, since the chamber passed another form of the bill just months ago. The massive margin of victory in the House—almost a two-to-one landslide—should encourage the Senate to pass the bill quickly.

President Bush has already pledged to sign the bill and the partial-birth-abortion procedure may soon be history. This advance should serve as a reminder that it really does matter who sits in the Oval Office. A similar ban was passed twice during the Clinton administration, but Clinton vetoed the legislation. Though he promised to make abortion “safe, legal, and rare,” President Clinton would not even sign a ban on this unconscionable procedure.

Partial-birth abortions are performed on late-term fetuses, including babies already at birth weight. The procedure takes the life of a partially delivered baby by allowing it to emerge from the birth canal feet-first, but stopping just before the head emerges. The doctor then inserts surgical scissors into the base of the skull and uses a suction catheter to suction out the infant's brain. At least for now, this procedure is fully legal. A baby is allowed to enter the birth canal, only to have its brain sucked out in the most cruel and inhuman procedure imaginable.

The motivation behind the partial-birth procedure is clear. Some women are determined to abort their infants even when those babies are almost fully developed and viable. If the baby is killed after it is fully delivered, the act would be murder. Therefore, the partial-birth option allows infanticide without calling it what it is. The difference between murder and “a woman's right to choose” is a few inches in the birth canal.

The partial-birth procedure sounds like a page of the notorious Nazi medical experiments. This ban will send a clear signal that Americans have had enough of this—and the Senate should act without delay.

Of course, once the bill becomes the law of the land, we can count on the inevitable challenges in the courts. The U.S.

Supreme Court has already nullified a Nebraska partial-birth abortion ban by a 5-4 decision [Stenberg v. Carhart, 2000]. The Center for Reproductive Rights and the American Civil Liberties Union have already stated their determination to fight the bill at the Supreme Court. The federal law now pending in the Senate seeks to avoid some of the Court's issues with the Nebraska statute, but no one can be certain that the High Court will not decide once again to defy the will of the people as represented through their legislators and find this law unconstitutional.

For now, however, we should note with appreciation the fact that this bill will be the first major advance in reversing the logic of Roe v. Wade. Pro-abortion forces fear this development because they know that time is not on their side. Bit by bit, ever so slowly, we are beginning to see progress in the battle for human life.

Killed by RU-486: One Girl's Lonely Death

Holly Patterson wanted to end her pregnancy in a hurry and without a surgical procedure, so she went down to the local Planned Parenthood clinic in Hayward, California in early September. She died on September 17—killed by a massive infection that set in after she took RU-486, the so-called “abortion pill” she had obtained through the clinic.

Abortion rights activists have cheered the development of RU-486 as a major means of liberating women from unwanted pregnancies. In essence, RU-486, often marketed as Mifeprex, is a human pesticide. It is now clear that the pill may not only kill the fetus, but it may also kill the mother.

The American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Christian Medical Association, and Concerned Women for America have released a citizen petition calling upon the U.S. Food and Drug Administration [FDA] to “halt all distribution and marketing” of the drug, charging that the FDA rushed the product through its approval process.

A website calling for the FDA to rescind its approval claims that at least six women have become seriously ill and two have died after taking RU-486. [see RU486FACTS web site] The site provides a wealth of information about the drug and links to a large list of news articles about the death of Holly Patterson.

Two days after her death, Holly's grieving father told the press, “There's no quick fix for pregnancy, no magic pill.” Within hours of taking the drug, Holly started bleeding severely. When taken by her boyfriend to a local hospital, she was sent home with painkillers. Three days later, she died of septic shock, due to an infection that was caused by the fact that fragments of the fetus had remained within her. [see excellent article at National Review Online]

The Culture of Death takes millions of victims, including some of those women who will take RU-486 as a means of killing the unborn life within them. Holly Patterson's death puts a human face on this tragic reality. Her father's tears remind us that the victims of abortion include not only the dead, but many among the living.

The Culture of Death looks nearly invincible. Because of this, any victory for life is a huge victory. We have much work to do and no time to waste.

