

The Life Letter



from

Bob Pitts



Proposed legislation recognizes pain of the unborn

The recent Partial Birth Abortion Ban trials have drawn new attention to the pain that unborn children feel during an abortion. The pain caused by the partial-birth method has been the subject of testimony during the ongoing trial before a federal judge in New York regarding the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. For example, the Associated Press reported on April 7: "A type of abortion banned under a new federal law would cause 'severe and excruciating' pain to 20-week-old fetuses, a medical expert testified yesterday ... 'I believe the fetus is conscious,'



Congressman Pitts joined Congressman Chris Smith, Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis, Senator Jim Talent, and Senator Sam Brownback at a press conference to announce the introduction of the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act

said Dr. Kanwaljeet 'Sonny' Anand, a pediatrician at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Dr. Anand also testified that that fetuses show increased heart rate, blood flow, and hormone levels in response to pain. An abortion doctor in the New York case testified that "upon contact of the needle with the fetal chest, I see a withdrawal response of the fetus, recoiling that I can see on the ultrasound."

With this in mind, on May 20, Rep. Chris Smith

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FDA: No sale of Morning After Pill over the counter

On May 6, 2004, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ruled that Barr laboratories, maker of the morning after pill "Plan B," could not sell the pill over the counter. The morning after pill can contain 8 times the hormones found in ordinary birth control pills.

Allowing Plan B to be available over the counter would make it like aspirin - available to children and adolescents of all ages, without restriction.

However, because the FDA under the Clinton Administration waived its own required trials, not enough study has been done on how unsupervised access to Plan B will impact the health and the behavior of adolescents.

Plan B is essentially an "overdose" of birth-control pills, all of which require a prescription. It is marketed and advertised as a "contraceptive" but even its own proponents admit that it works before and

after conception, making it an abortifacient as well.

Medical authorities in the United Kingdom and New Zealand have issued warnings about the drug's dangers. This type of morning-after pill has been associated with a heightened risk of ectopic pregnancy a potentially fatal condition.

Regions that allow easy access to emergency contraceptives experience a significant increase in sexually-

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Recent Poll shows that more Americans are pro-life

In a poll released Friday April 23, 2004 by Zogby International, a total of 56 percent of Americans agreed with one of the following pro-life views: abortion should never be legal (18 percent), legal only when the life of the mother is in danger (15 percent) or legal only when the life of the mother is in danger or in cases of rape or incest (23 percent).

Since abortions in cases of rape or incest or those necessary to save the life of the mother are extremely rare, that means a majority of Americans oppose approximately 96 percent of all abortions.

Only 42 percent of those surveyed agreed with one of the following statements supporting abortion: abortion should be legal for any reason in the first 3 months (25 percent), legal for any reason during the first 6 months (4 percent) or legal for any reason at any time during the woman's pregnancy (13 percent).

When asked to simply identify themselves as "pro-life" or "pro-choice," Americans said they were pro-life by a 49-45 percent margin.

With 49 percent calling themselves pro-life and 56 percent of Americans taking a pro-life position on abortion, some confusion exists about the labels used to identify both sides of the abortion debate.

Even more encouraging is that the message of the value of unborn life is getting through to younger generations. The Zogby poll found that 51.6% of 18-29 year-olds call themselves "pro-life. In the Zogby poll, 60 percent of 18-29 year-olds took one of the pro-life positions on abortion while only 39 percent agreed with the three pro-abortion stances. Some twenty-six percent of young Americans said abortions should never be legal.

On the question of whether abortion should not be permitted after the fetal heartbeat begins, 65.5% of 18-29 year-olds agreed, 46.9%

strongly so. The human heart begins to beat 18-21 days after fertilization, before most women realize they are pregnant.

With a majority of Americans backing a pro-life position, President Bush has strong support for the pro-life legislation he has signed, including a ban on partial-birth abortions and a bill to protect pregnant mothers and their unborn children from violence.

Zogby International polled 1,209 individuals from April 15-17 and the margin of error is +/- 2.8 percent.

Real Alternatives, a government-funded program in Pennsylvania offering alternatives to abortion, celebrated a milestone, receiving the 10,000th call on its toll-free hotline. When a pregnant woman calls this hotline, a crisis counselor directs her to local resources.

The woman is also connected to a counselor in her area. She receives comprehensive assistance.

Each and every pregnant woman deserves to know that she is not alone - that she can receive help to make ends meet as a mother or that there are homes waiting to welcome her child into their family. These resources are just a phone call away - 1-800-LIFE-AID.



Congressman Pitts joined Reps. Mike Pence (R, IN-06) and Chris Smith (R, NJ-04) to discuss the issue of fetal pain at a press conference to mark the beginning of closing arguments in the court challenges to the partial birth abortion ban.

Fetal Pain bill introduced in House and Senate

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introduced H.R. 4420, the "Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act." I was one of 27 original cosponsors of this bill. It would require abortion providers to notify women who want to have an abortion 20 weeks after fertilization that the evidence suggests their unborn child feels pain, and they have **the option** to obtain anesthesia for their unborn child before the abortion in order to reduce or eliminate the pain. This legislation would not require anesthesia and it specifically protects the doctor's right to inform the woman of all the risks to her according to his or

her own best medical judgment. Women have the right to know the facts about the medical development of unborn children and that they have the option to minimize or eliminate the pain an unborn child would feel during an abortion.

The Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act contains a number of proposed congressional "findings" regarding the scientific evidence that unborn children would experience great pain during abortions at 20 weeks (and perhaps earlier). The findings also cite a number of existing federal laws that seek

to diminish the suffering even of animals, such as restrictions on how livestock are slaughtered and restrictions on the use of animals in medical research.

Senator Brownback has introduced the same bill in the Senate.

Abortion's Unknown Cost

Each year, 1.18 million women have abortions. Yet no long-term study has ever been done in order to assess the emotional impact of abortion on women.

One of the major weaknesses of past research on post-abortive women has been the reliance on anecdotal research conducted using a small sample of individuals over a short period of time.

There is strong anecdotal evidence that women who have abortions may experience feelings of loss, guilt and depression in connection with their abortion. However, many women do not begin to exhibit signs of abortion-related depression until many years after their abortion, when a woman experiences another life event that reminds her of

the circumstances surrounding her abortion.

Most women are not fully informed about the potential emotional impact of abortion on their lives, and therefore, are unable to give informed consent for an abortion procedure.

I introduced a bill, H.R. 4543, that would provide \$15 million for the National Institutes of Health to research the emotional impact of abortion on women.

This bill also creates a \$1.5 million grant program to fund the development of treatment programs for women who suffer from post-abortion depression.



Dr. Jean Wright, an expert in pediatrics and fetal pain, presented the most up to date scientific information on the development of unborn children and their ability to feel pain at the most recent Congressional Life Forum, a series of briefings I started in 1997. The issue of fetal pain has garnered considerable attention recently due to the ongoing trials on the Partial Birth Abortion Ban, the introduction of the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act (HR 4420), and amazing advances in fetal surgery.

No Morning After Pill over the counter...for now

'Morning After' from page one... transmitted diseases. In the UK, chlamydia cases rose from 7,000 in 1999 to 10,000 cases last year. Gonorrhea cases climbed nearly 50 percent, to nearly 3,000 cases last year, up from 2,000 in 1999. The highest increases were among 16-19 year old population.

Rather than reducing the core problem of young people engaging in sexual activity (which carries life-long consequences), it encourages sexual activity. An official survey revealed that MAP use among teenage girls in the UK more than doubled since it became available in pharmacies,

increasing from one in 12 teenagers to one in five. Among them were girls as young as 12. A girl who said she was 10 years old told the pharmacist "she had already used it four times."

The *Bangkok Post* also reported disturbing consequences of easy availability of the morning-after pill for the past 15 years. For example, random studies showed that men are the most frequent buyers.

"They buy the pills for their girlfriends or wives so that they don't have to wear condoms and feel they're at no risk of becoming a father afterwards. Some women I've spoken to said that they didn't even know what they were

taking; that the guy just said it was a health supplement," said Nattaya Boonpakdee, program assistant at the Population Council (an agency dedicated to promoting and developing contraception and abortion methods).

Barr Laboratories will be back. They have been asked by the FDA to provide information showing that MAP can be safely used on girls 16 years and under. Or, alternatively, to come up with a prescription-only procedure for younger girls, while selling them like cigarettes or alcohol only to older girls and women.

CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH R PITTS
204 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON DC 20515



M.C.