

PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE ACTION RAISES HACKLES OF PRO-ABORTION SUPPORTERS

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PINE BLUFFS — Okay, so we lost on HB78 and SF66. We lost because, unlike the pro-abortion folks, we didn't get out there early enough, we didn't counter their pressure tactics soon enough with our own, and didn't let our guys in the House and Senate know we love 'em. The peculiarities of a short, budget session also played a role.

HB78 became necessary because of a court decision — State v. Foust, a case involving Wyoming's methamphetamine-endangering children before birth statute. That court decision made it imperative that someone in the Legislature step up and file a bill amending the definition of "child" in that statute to include the words "unborn child," so that women who ingest meth during pregnancy might be prosecuted for endangering the baby in their wombs.

SF66, the Homicide during Pregnancy Act, would have added an additional 20 years to the sentence of anyone murdering a pregnant woman.

LEGISLATORS RESPOND

In fact, two Legislators *did* step up. "Representative Elaine Harvey (R-Big Horn/Park) worked long and hard to write a well-drafted bill [HB87] addressing [this] concern," said Keith Gingery (R-Fremont/Teton). House co-sponsors included Gingery, Hastert, Osborn, Pederson and White. Senate co-sponsors? Jim Anderson, John Barrasso and Kit Jennings. SF66 was introduced in the Senate by John Barrasso (R-Natrona). Both bills, if successful, would have taken effect on 7/1/06. But both faced problems from the get-go.

PRO-ABORTION GROUPS FIGHT

The first? Predictably, abortion advocates were up-in-arms. Some of these people, who live *etsi Deus non daretur* — as if God didn't exist — are willing to demonstrate carrying placards to "save the baby whales," but will do nothing to stop the slaughter of baby humans. At the end of January, NARAL Pro-Choice Wyoming announced plans to lobby against both bills (Abortion Rights group sounds alarm on bills, *Casper Star-Tribune*, 1/31/06). Planned Parenthood, which regards abortion as healthcare, joined the fray, as did Wyoming's chapter of the ACLU. They don't want to see any laws recognizing the worth of an unborn child.

BUDGET SESSION REQUIRES TWO THIRDS INTRODUCTORY VOTE

Another hurdle needed to be overcome. "This is a budget session," supporter Pete Anderson (R-Laramie) said, "beginning Feb. 13 and lasting for only 20 days. Every non-budget bill requires a two-thirds majority vote in the chamber of introduction." Were these bills budget bills? "Many would argue [they] are budget item[s]," Rep. Brechtel (R-Natrona) said. "As with others that have an appropriation attached there's at least a small affect to the budget." Bob's thinking aside, when the time came, both bills were considered as non-budget items.

The introductory vote occurred early. HB87 failed introduction with 35 ayes, 24 nos and 1 excused. SF66 failed introduction with 15 ayes and 15 nos. Actually, that's not too bad. Next year's session will not be a budget session. Only a simple majority will be required to introduce a bill. If filed again, they should sail through with little difficulty.

DANGERS OF METHAMPHETAMINE

Use of Methamphetamine, known as "crank," is spreading. Is it really harmful enough to require legislation like HB87? Senator Barrasso again: "Meth is highly addictive. When mother and baby go off meth, they suffer from withdrawal symptoms. Babies exposed to meth during pregnancy suffer from developmental delays."

He's right. The dangers of meth *are* severe. Merck's Pharmaceutical Manual lists them:

"Amphetamine abusers are prone to accidents because the drug produces excitation and grandiosity followed by excess fatigue and sleeplessness. Taken intravenously [it] may lead to serious antisocial behavior and precipitate schizophrenic episodes. Continued high doses produce anxiety reactions during which users are fearful, tremulous, and concerned about their physical well-being, and psychosis in which the person misinterprets others' actions, hallucinates and becomes unrealistically suspicious; [also] an exhaustion syndrome, involving intense fatigue and need for sleep after the stimulation phase, and prolonged depression during which suicide is possible" In the Foust case, both mother and child were confirmed positive for meth by a toxicology test, proving that meth is passed from mother to child during pregnancy.

COMPELLING STATE INTEREST

Pro-Life/ Pro-Choice arguments aside, there's a compelling State interest in passage of such legislation. Because of the affects cited above, pregnant women using meth pass quantities of the drug along to unborn children, causing problems which unduly burden the healthcare and educational systems, not to mention the increased numbers of fatal automobile accidents and suicides that occur. Dr. Rizwan Shah, a pediatrician/expert on meth at a Des Moines hospital said; "Some meth-exposed kids . . . suffer serious brain damage; others, long-lasting developmental problems including disruptive sleep cycles, hyperactivity and attention-deficit disorder. Beyond doubt, pregnant women using meth are harming their babies."

So we lost this year on these two. But the people of Wyoming are predominantly pro-life. Most understand that unborn babies have value. While it's a shame that they'll have to wait another year to be protected in their mother's wombs, there's always next year.

And we *are* doing well on several other family-friendly items. Elsewhere, WyWatch has printed a list. There's still time to help with them. What can you do? Immediately contact as many legislators as possible, urging a favorable introductory vote. E-mail is the preferred way.

Go to <http://legisweb.state.wy.us> for a list of e-mail addresses. During what's left of the session, call the Senate receptionist (307-777-7711) or the House receptionist (307-777-7852). Leave messages of support. Also, the toll-free Voter Hotline (1-866-996-8683), allows you to recommend a vote for or against a particular bill.

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