

PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION BAN DELAY IS RIDICULOUS

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TOWSON – In the world of politics, everything moves slowly. But considering the length of time it's taking to outlaw partial-birth abortion, the delay seems ridiculous.

In September 1996, Dan Medinger, Editor of *The Catholic Review*, Baltimore's Archdiocesan newspaper, wrote, "Partial-birth abortion is never medically necessary and those who make that claim are specialists in this area of medicine." (*The Catholic Review*, 9/18/96). Shortly before his editorial appeared, President Clinton, ignoring in-depth national polls that 65% of Americans thought this process should be outlawed, vetoed a Congressional ban. He claimed the procedure was rare and used only in emergencies. The House overrode his veto, but the Senate failed to do so. Although both Maryland senators acknowledged receiving "stacks of boxes" of postcards from constituents begging them to vote for the override, both voted against overriding Clinton's veto.

In May 1997, the issue was again before Congress. Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, revealed that the excuse Mr. Clinton and Democrat supporters offered for rejecting the ban was a lie; that thousands of these procedures are performed every year in America, mainly on healthy mothers five months pregnant with healthy babies. Later, the AMA's Board approved a report stating, "there are no situations in which intact dilation and extraction [known as partial-birth abortion] is the only appropriate procedure to induce abortion." It

concluded that, "Except in extraordinary circumstances, maternal health factors which demand termination of pregnancy can be accommodated without sacrificing the fetus, and the near certainty of the viability of the fetus argues for ending the pregnancy by appropriate delivery."

In partial-birth abortion, a doctor delivers the legs, arms and torso of the baby, pierces its skull while the head is still in the birth canal, inserts a sharp instrument into the base of the skull to suck out the brain, and then completes the delivery. The baby, alive moments before, is now dead.

For a second time, Congress acted to ban this practice. In the Senate, every Republican senator voted for the ban. Only 13 Democrat senators did so. Maryland's Senators Mikulski and Sarbanes voted to continue to permit the gruesome procedure. Again, the Democrat President, ignoring polls showing that 71% of Americans now wanted this procedure made illegal, vetoed the ban. In May 1998, the House voted to override, but in September, the Senate, lacking three votes, did not. Maryland's senators ignored one time Bishop of the Harrisburg Diocese and presently Baltimore Archdiocesan Cardinal, William Keeler's plea (*The Catholic Review*, 9/17/98) and upheld their leader's veto.

Now, a partial-birth abortion ban is back before Congress. Both houses have passed legislation. On March 13, 2003, the Senate passed the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act (S. 3), sponsored by Pennsylvania's pro-life Senator, Rick Santorum (R., Pa), by a vote of 64-33. The House passed its Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act (H. R. 760) on June 4, 2003. Its chief sponsor was Representative Steven Chabot (R., Ohio).

The problem? Language in the Senate bill added by Harkin (D., IA) and supported by Boxer (D., CA), that would affirm *Roe v. Wade*. The House struck that

language when it voted 282-139 to pass the ban. But those two senators, fearing that a ban on partial-birth abortion might lead to overturning *Roe v. Wade*, insist the language, now referred to as the Harkin Amendment, be included, thus preventing sending the measure to conference, a vital step before a final vote on the bill. In fact, Senator Boxer insisted on eight additional hours of debate on whether to send the measure onward. This ploy was simply designed to slow the bill down, stalling it just long enough to kill its chances of passage in this Congress. Why? Because Democrats know that they cannot permit this bill to proceed to the White House, where a pro-life president awaits it.

“Apparently they’re trying to pull a maneuver to keep the Roe language in the final bill - something that divides us,” Senator Graham (R., N. C.) said. “What unites Congress and the public is banning partial-birth abortion . . .”

So after more than seven years, abortion politics is still being played ruthlessly on Capital Hill by abortion supporters, keeping legal something that few fail to recognize as a horrible atrocity. “The problem,” says Father McLean Cummings, in his wonderful book, *Making God the Joy of Our Soul*, is “. . . (some) lawmakers and judges and medical professionals, who can calmly decree death, have . . . corrupt wills and faithless hearts. This leads to a darkening of the intellect and to the extinction of basic human emotions.”

Politically, there’s another problem, this one embedded deeply within the Democrat Party. In order to keep what has now become a part of its base, it must pander to such abortion rights advocates as the National Organization for Woman (NOW), Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), and the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), radical feminists, women who are pro-abortion across the

board, Hollywood figures of dubious morality, and major media pundits such as *Washington Post* columnist, Ellen Goodman, who see a measure like this as weakening the so-called woman's right to choose. And so, day after day, we hear leaders in the Democrat Party such as Bill and Hillary Clinton, Al Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and others participating in a campaign of misinformation, disinformation and no information regarding this so-called "medical procedure."

Seven weeks ago, in the Democratic Leadership Council's magazine *Blueprint*, CEO Al From and President Bruce Reed wrote, "With the electorate split down the middle, a candidate . . . can win the presidency only if he convinces voters that he is better than his Party." They were acknowledging their Party's lurch to the left politically, toward socialism and even communism. But when applied to partial-birth abortion, their point is equally well taken. On this issue, a solid majority of the public is closer to the Republican position than the Democrat stance, closer to a morally sound position than one that is clearly not.

While the Democrat Party leadership continues to defy large numbers of the Party's rank and file to cater to a narrow pro-abortion constituency, the gap between the public and the Party widens. And babies continue to die in this ghastly way.

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