

## WYOMING LEGISLATURE PACKS UP AND GOES HOME

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PINE BLUFFS — Wyoming's 59<sup>th</sup> Legislature closed up shop on Thursday, March 1<sup>st</sup> in Cheyenne, after an intense forty-day session which saw only one of five bills of concern to pro-lifers pass both Houses and reach the Governor's desk. That bill, SF118, the Homicide While Pregnant bill, fell victim to Governor Freudenthal's veto pen eight days later. The other four failed earlier, although each made it further through the legislative process than ever before.

SF118 would have established the offense of homicide of an unborn child when the child's mother is murdered and her pregnancy is terminated without a live birth. It recognized that there are two victims instead of one. That's what sealed its fate.

From the moment it passed the Senate on 3<sup>rd</sup> reading, SF118 was attacked by those who don't want the "fetus" to be seen as a separate life. KGWN's newscasters constantly referred to it as the "fetal homicide bill," attempting to mask the fact that the fetus is an unborn baby. Will somebody please tell them what the word "fetus" means? And the Casper Star-Tribune's editorial staff, in a vitriolic editorial on February 28<sup>th</sup>, urged the Governor to "veto a bill that creates the crime of fetal homicide in Wyoming." This newspaper may be more conservative than its counterpart in Cheyenne, but it is *not* pro-life.

Under intense pressure from his base supporters in NARAL and other pr-abortion

rights groups, Governor Freudenthal, in his veto statement, said: "This Act simply creates too many problems, without any benefit to the State and its citizens that I can perceive."

John Birbari, Wyoming Family Coalitions' president, feels differently: "This is simply a case of the governor putting politics ahead of human lives and is a sad day for expectant mothers in this state," he said.

HB144, "*A Woman's Right to Know*", would have required abortion practitioners to provide expectant mothers with information and options before the procedure. After clearing the House Judiciary Committee by a hair-raising 5-4 vote, it passed the House on third reading, 39-21.

On Friday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, KGWN conducted a poll: "Should the bill requiring doctors to disclose risks and alternatives about abortion pass?" Despite an overwhelmingly favorable response – 78% yes, 21% no – the bill died in a Senate Committee. Doctors opposed this bill, claiming that since consent forms are used for most procedures, it is unnecessary.

Rep. Erin Mercer (R-Campbell) disagreed. "[It is] my sincere belief that we must err on the side of better information and the best possible options for elective procedures and making sure women know these options."

HB68, *Methamphetamine Endangering Children before Birth* bill sponsored by Rep. Elaine Harvey (R-Big Horn/Park) and three other House members, sought to amend an existing statute to include "unborn children," thus protecting them from the effects of meth used by the mother during pregnancy. After clearing the House, it died

in the senior chamber.

“I’m very disappointed that HB68 couldn’t make it through the Senate,” Representative Keith Gingery (R-Teton) said. “The House worked hard on that bill.”

HB79, *Reporting of Abortions*, would have mandated reporting requirements for abortion providers: i.e. number of procedures performed, age of the mother, length of gestation period, etc. Again, faced with strong opposition from the medical profession, it did not survive.

SF13, *Same Sex Marriages*, would have amended Wyoming’s existing statute to provide that any marriage between persons of the same sex is void. The bill squeaked past the Senate Judiciary Committee on January 26<sup>th</sup> by a 3-2 vote, but died later.

At the start of this Session, Rep. Bob Brechtel (R-Natrona) told me, “If even one of these five bills makes it through, it will be great.” How prophetic. Although all five progressed further this year than ever before, all show that despite being overwhelmingly pro-life, Wyoming voters continue to send numerous pro-choice legislators to Cheyenne, thus ensuring that pro-life bills will have unhappy outcomes. As for the man in the State House? The last election presented a clear choice between a pro-abortion incumbent and a highly qualified, pro-life challenger. The veto of SF118 reflects that election result.

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