

Legislature Enacts Pro-Life Law, SB 1878, Over Governor's Veto

A bill to help protect women, unborn children, health care professionals, and individuals with disabilities was voted into law by the Oklahoma legislature on April 17, 2008. Supporters of **SB 1878**, led by the authors, Senator Todd Lamb and Representative Pam Peterson, overcame Governor Brad Henry's veto of the pro-life legislation, the first time in 14 years that a veto had been overridden by the Oklahoma legislature. The law has five parts:

1) It protects health care professionals' freedom of conscience by upholding their right to refuse to participate in the taking of an innocent human life. The preeminent principle of medical ethics is, "*First, do no harm.*" Society must protect health care professionals' right to refuse to be involved in the destruction of an innocent human life. "*Freedom of choice*" for one person must never force on another the obligation to be complicit in the killing.

2) It ensures that RU-486, the chemical abortion pill, is used in accordance with federal Food and Drug Administration guidelines. RU-486 is used by abortionists to cause the deaths of unborn children who are approximately five to nine weeks old. The deaths of several mothers following RU-486 abortions have caused concern about the ways in which some abortion practitioners use the drugs.

3) It ensures that a mother's consent to an abortion is truly voluntary, and safeguards against coerced abortions. Many women, of all ages, are pressured to have abortions. Boyfriends are the chief offender, though not the only one. A desire to evade responsibility for child support is a frequent motive. And threats, tragically, often turn violent if the woman follows her maternal instincts and refuses to abort the baby: *among pregnant women in the United States, a leading cause of death is murder.*

4) It provides a woman an ultrasound of her unborn child which she may view prior to an abortion. For the baby, it is the last line of defense. For the mother, the ultrasound provides the benefit of crucial information prior to an act that is irrevocable. *Someday, she will see an ultrasound* – on television, on a magazine cover, on a friend's refrigerator. This bill allows her to see it when it can still influence her life-or-death decision.

When former Rep. Kevin Calvey authored an ultrasound law in 2006, he got an email from a woman who told him that, 17 years earlier, she had gone to a clinic to get an abortion. The doctor was using ultrasound as he got ready to begin the abortion, but he inadvertently turned the screen at an angle where she was able to view it. She saw that, unbeknownst to her, she was pregnant with twins. She told the doctor to stop, got up off the table, and left the clinic, never to return. She wanted Rep. Calvey to know that she was very thankful for her 16-year-old twins.

5) It fosters respect for babies with disabilities by disallowing wrongful-life lawsuits that claim *life* is a "wrong" for a baby with a disability – and that a less-than-perfect baby would have been better off being aborted. Such cases severely undermine society's respect for persons with disabilities, and promote the specter of eugenic abortions. The pressure in our culture for "quality control" carries over for some to their attitude about babies, and has had a corrosive effect on our society's respect for the sanctity of human life. Doctors are put under tremendous pressure by the coercive effect of malpractice lawsuits to abandon their life-affirming values and, instead, participate in what former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD, described as "search and destroy missions."

Not the medical profession, nor the court system, nor society at large should be accomplices in a program of selectively eliminating (killing) those unborn children who don't measure up to some arbitrary standard of perfection.

Oklahoma is the first state to ensure that each woman planning an abortion be provided an ultrasound, so that she might make a truly informed decision.