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New Poll Results: Most Believe Abortion Makes Women's Lives Worse

Guidebook Encourages Pro-Life Candidates to Adopt Pro-Woman/Pro-Life Agenda

As the 2004 election year heats up, candidates must once again grapple with the divisive issue of abortion. All the same old arguments will be heard, of course. But this year may also witness a major shift in goals, rhetoric, and voting patterns — if the strategy promoted in a new Elliot Institute pocket guide is widely adopted by pro-life politicians.

Reversing the Gender Gap: Touch the Hearts, Earn the Trust and Win the Votes of 30 Million Post-Abortive Women includes results and analysis from a new national poll indicating that the majority of Americans believe abortion makes women's lives worse.

According to the poll, only 16 percent believe abortion generally makes women's lives better. Even among those who describe themselves as "pro-choice," fewer than 30 percent believe abortion generally improves women's lives. In addition, 67 percent of pro-choice women stated they would be "more likely to vote for a candidate who calls for government support for grief counseling programs to assist women who experience emotional problems after an abortion."

Elliot Institute director David Reardon believes the poll results reflect a reality that has long been misunderstood by politicians on both sides of the abortion debate.

"At least one of every four women voters has had an abortion, and most of these women consider it to be an ugly, painful memory," he said. "Most have many regrets about their abortions, even if they believe it to have been their 'only choice.' This is why they don't support the radical agenda of pro-abortion special interest groups. They've been there, done that, and hated it."

Based on his studies of post-abortive women and the national polling data, Reardon believes that most post-abortive women would be glad to see abortion go away — but only if it can be done in a way that helps women.

"Post-abortive women are deeply concerned about, and protective of, other women who face the same problems and pressures," Reardon said. "They're also turned off by people who don't understand the pressures women face."

Reardon says post-abortive women do not generally support easier access to abortion, federal funding for abortion, or the nomination of federal judges who will strike down abortion regulations. Instead, he claims, the biggest impact abortion has on their voting patterns is related to their perceptions of acceptance.

"Generally, what post-abortive women are looking for in others is understanding and compassion," he said. "But while on one hand they can no longer swallow the pro-abortionists' argument that

abortion is a good thing, they also fear that anyone who readily condemns abortion is also ready to condemn them."

Reversing the Gender Gap presents evidence and arguments for the claim that pro-life candidates will make great

gains at the polls when they begin to directly address this fear of rejection.

"When a pro-abortion candidate declares 'I'm pro-choice, but my opponent is against choice,' what the post-abortive woman hears is, 'I don't judge you, but my opponent does,'" Reardon said. "This inference will stick, unless pro-life candidates directly address this inherent fear of judgment, acknowledge the pressures women feel to have abortions, and offer positive solutions."

Reardon believes pro-life politicians need to move beyond explaining why they are against abortion to a platform that emphasizes proposals for helping women both to avoid abortions and to recover from past abortions.

"This message will not only neutralize the gender gap, it will reverse it," he said. "Post-abortive women are yearning to have their pain, loss, and regrets understood and respected. While they recoil from judgment, they are attracted to authentic concern and compassion."

Polling data reported in *Reversing the Gender Gap* also suggests that pro-life efforts to address the problem of coerced abortions will produce significant political gains for pro-life candidates.

"Between 30 and 60 percent of women who've had abortions felt pressured to do so by others," Reardon said. "Candidates need to

Post-abortive women don't support the radical agenda of pro-abortion groups.

boldly and consistently articulate their desire to ‘prevent unwanted, unnecessary, and unsafe abortions’ and to ‘promote healing for those who already suffer from past abortions.’ These two themes will strongly resonate with the real needs and concerns of post-abortion women.”

Reardon calls this alternative to the traditional pro-life message a “pro-woman/pro-life” approach. He believes this message will also help pro-life politicians to break down the stereotype that pro-lifers are judgmental and condemning. And he says this should help them build bridges to other constituents as well, including the families and friends of post-abortion women.

Reardon believes that the combination of facts, strategy tips, and sound bites included in the booklet will empower candidates to “boldly, confidently, and compassionately” address the real concerns of post-abortion women. Moreover, he says, the new polling data in the booklet suggests that the time is ripe for aligning public opinion behind a pro-woman/pro-life message.

If this pro-woman message becomes a centerpiece of campaigns, Reardon believes, pro-life politicians will be able to shift the voting patterns of 30 million post-abortion women, and their sympathizers, to their favor by several percentage points. This advantage can grow even stronger if pro-life candidates incessantly challenge their opponents to state whether or not they will support post-abortion counseling programs and legislation that would help hold abortionists more properly liable for abortion-related injuries.

“Opponents who concede support for these proposals are thereby admitting abortion is a poor choice and women deserve better,” Reardon said. “This admission will cost them the support of ‘poor-choice’ radicals and shape the political landscape to our advantage.

“On the other hand, if they oppose these pro-woman proposals, the pro-life candidate can loudly complain that the ‘pro-choice’ candidate is really the ‘poor-choice’ candidate who is less concerned with protecting women than with protecting the profits of the abortion industry. The opponent’s only other option is to simply sound evasive, insensitive, or confused. That will just serve to underscore that the pro-woman/pro-life candidate is the most reasonable and caring choice.”

The Elliot Institute is asking pro-life organizations and activists to distribute *Reversing the Gender Gap* to all elected pro-life officials and candidates in their region or state. A free ebook version of *Reversing the Gender Gap* is available for download at www.afterabortion.info/reports. Advanced orders for printed copies of the booklet, suitable for mailing in a standard business size envelope, can be placed by calling 1-217-525-8202.

Panel to Hear Case Asking Supreme Court to Overturn Roe Judges Say They Won’t Hear Oral Arguments in McCorvey Case

A federal appeals court has named a judicial panel to hear arguments in *McCorvey vs. Hill* — a case that could lead to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* — but says it will not hear oral arguments in the case.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals named three judges to hear Norma McCorvey’s motion to have *Roe* revisited by the U.S. Supreme Court. McCorvey — the original plaintiff in *Roe*, which struck down state laws banning abortion — filed the motion under Rule 60, which allows litigants to petition the court to overturn their cases based on new evidence that was not available at the time of the original ruling.

The judges on the panel — Judges Edith Holland Jones, Edward Prado, and Jacques L. Wiener — said they will base their decision on written arguments submitted by McCorvey’s attorneys, but will not hear oral arguments. The state attorney general’s office in Texas (the defendant in *Roe*), is not opposing McCorvey’s motion, and the appeals court has denied a motion by a group of pro-abortion attorneys to file an amicus brief in the case.

McCorvey’s motion includes over 5,000 pages of evidence attesting to the humanity of the unborn child and the damage abortion causes to women, including affidavits from more than 1,000 women who say they have been harmed by abortion. The evidence also includes affidavits submitted by the Elliot Institute documenting abortion risks.

Allan Parker of the Justice Foundation, which is handling McCorvey’s case, said he was surprised by the court’s decision not to hear oral arguments, but that he is pleased with the judges selected for the panel and thinks they may want the case to go to the Supreme Court.

The appeals court decided to hear *McCorvey vs. Hill* after a lower court judge ruled that too much time had passed since the original case was filed. Parker said the Supreme Court has overturned rulings issued as long as 41 years ago, longer than the 31 years that have passed since *Roe*.

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Talking With Your Children About Your Abortion

Amy R. Sobie

Theresa Bonopartis vividly remembers the day, more than 20 years ago, that she phoned her doctor for the results of her pregnancy test. She was 18, unmarried, and scared. The doctor's words confirmed what, despite months of denial, she already knew—she was almost four months pregnant.

She and her boyfriend decided to marry. But then her parents kicked her out, telling her to forget she was their daughter. She and her boyfriend broke up. Her father urged her to have an abortion, which she initially resisted. But without a job, housing, or any support, she felt she had no choice but to give in.

For years, she tried to forget about the second-trimester abortion—a grueling experience involving 12 hours of labor and seeing the body of her unborn child. After marriage to an abusive husband, the birth of two sons, a divorce, and a semi-reconciliation with her parents, she went back to school to earn a counseling degree. But within a year of starting her first job, she was burnt out, struggling with depression and suicidal thoughts.

Although she had returned to the Catholic faith in which she'd been raised, she didn't believe God could forgive her for what she had done. Finally, feeling she had nowhere else to turn, she sought counseling from her parish priest. For the first time in ten years, she began to feel a sense of peace and healing. But one question still nagged her—should she tell her two sons about her abortion?

"I felt that God was calling me to speak about abortion, but I knew I couldn't unless my children knew first," she said. "I was concerned about how it was going to effect them and I thought they would never forgive me. I was terrified they would hate me."

To Tell or Not to Tell?

Abortion is often a deeply guarded secret, surrounded by silence and shame. Even parents who may feel comfortable sharing their story with other adults may hesitate when it comes to telling their children. They may worry about fracturing their relationship with their children, especially young children who tend to see Mom and Dad in nurturing and protecting roles. Many parents fear that even their adult children will react to news of a past abortion with condemnation and disgust.

The parents' questions and concerns are many: "What if my children hate me? What if they don't forgive me? Will my children still believe I love them and would never hurt them? When is the right time to tell them, and how much do I share with them? Should I even be telling them about this part of my life at all?"

Some experts, like Dr. Philip Ney, a psychiatrist who has done extensive work with abortion survivors and siblings of aborted

through Hope Alive ministries in Vancouver, Canada, say that children need to know about the parent's abortion because of the effect the abortion can have on the family.

"In some respects, the decision to talk or not talk about your pregnancy loss, particularly an abortion, is academic," Ney said. "There are very few real secrets within the family. The facts seem to indicate that the loss that has affected you will be communicated in one way or another, and children guess at what happened. You cannot not communicate. You will show that something has changed you, especially something as disturbing as an abortion."

Ney said that children often sense that there are "pseudo-secrets" within the family, and even very young children may be aware that their mother was pregnant but a baby never arrived. This may cause young children to question their own security and lead to a sense of mistrust and lack of communication with the parents. Some children may become withdrawn, angry, and uncommunicative if the issue of the abortion is not addressed.

"Parents need to remember that the pain of an abortion is never private, so resolving the pain and conflict cannot be private," said Ney. "It is better that the issue be dealt with as carefully and clearly as possible. It may take time to help your children work through the conflicts, but it is vitally important that you do so. The outcome will be much better than you might expect during the period of turmoil."

Kevin Burke, who holds a master's degree in social work and runs Rachel's Vineyard post-abortion ministries with his wife, therapist Theresa Burke, suggested that parents talk to a trusted counselor or therapist before making the decision to divulge news of an abortion to their children. He said that parents need to think carefully about how, what, and when they should tell their children.

"The burden must fall on us as parents to justify the benefits to the child in telling them this information," he said. He suggests that before parents talk to their children, they ask themselves the following questions:

- How will this benefit my children?
- How will this affect their development now and in the future?
- How will this contribute to or interfere with their own emotional maturation and development?
- How will this contribute to or interfere with their relationship with me and my role as a parent?
- What is the benefit to telling them now rather than waiting until they are a young adult or adult and can more easily integrate the information into their adult minds and understand the issue and the parents' experience?

Dr. Theresa Burke agrees that parents need to carefully weigh the

**"I was afraid my sons
would hate me if I told
them of my abortion."**

possible benefits and harms to their children before telling them. She is concerned that some parents may feel driven to tell their children from a “desire to ‘vicariously’ reconcile with one’s aborted child.” For this reason, she said, parents need to develop a relationship with their aborted child before they consider telling their living children about the abortion.

Bonopartis said she tried several times to speak with her sons, but each time she held back, unable to utter the words. Finally, when they were in their early teens, she felt she was being “given the grace” to tell them.

“I never overcame the fears,” she said. “I think I just moved forward in spite of them, placing my trust in God because I knew He was asking me to tell them, and I trusted Him because of my own healing. I told them the basics . . . I did not go into details of the abortion. They cried, and as is often the case, they went through very different responses. One was very angry and the other wanted to protect me.”

Why Some Parents Choose to Tell

Parents cite a number of reasons for choosing to talk with their children about a past abortion. These include:

(1) If the abortion is publicly known because the mother and/or father have shared their testimony in public settings, or feel called to begin speaking out about their experience; or if there is another reason to believe that the child may find out about the abortion from another source.

“No one has the right to know about an abortion before family members,” said Bonopartis, who waited to speak publicly about her abortion until her two sons felt comfortable with her doing so. “I believe family members have a right to their time of grief and working it out. They also have a right to give their input—including the children—as to whether they are comfortable having the post-abortive person speak publicly about their experience.”

(2) If the parents suspect that their children are aware or have guessed that an abortion took place in the family (for example, if the children were born before the abortion and may have guessed that the mother was pregnant).

Cecilia Brown, who had an abortion at 18, had planned to tell her daughter about her abortion herself someday. Instead, she was dismayed to learn that someone who was angry at Cecilia had already told her daughter.

“When my daughter found out I don’t know, but I do know that she dwelled on it for a while,” Brown said. “Then she got mad at me one day and started to blurt out angry words. I waited until she calmed down and then talked to her about it. . . . She was more angry at the fact that I had not been the one to tell her.”

(3) If the abortion has resulted in serious consequences for the parents—such as severe depression, substance abuse, divorce, or violence in the home—that have impacted the children and the parents’ relationship with them, and the parents feel that telling the children will be a step toward healing the wounds within the family.

Tips for Talking With Your Children About a Past Abortion

1) Make sure you have worked through the grief process first. Parents need to be far enough along in their own healing to be able to cope with their children’s emotional reactions.

2) Pray and discern the Holy Spirit’s leading before deciding whether to talk with your children about a past abortion. Seek the advice of a trusted counselor, minister, or priest.

3) Think about your motives for telling your children. Go through the list of questions suggested by Kevin Burke on page 3. Parents need to make sure they are acting in the best interests of their children rather than seeking to resolve issues in their own lives.

4) Think about your children’s level of maturity and ability to handle such information. Are they experiencing personal or family conflicts that might be worsened by learning about the abortion now? Are they emotionally mature enough to handle such information, or would it be better to wait until they are older before telling them?

If you choose to tell:

5) Be age-appropriate in discussing past abortions with your children. Teens or young adults may be able to handle details that would not be appropriate to share with young children.

6) Reassure your children that you will always love and accept them no matter what, not only through words but through your willingness to listen and spend time with them. Make sure teens and older children know they can always come to you for help if they are experiencing a similar crisis.

7) Have outside support in place — a trusted counselor or pastor, knowledgeable family friend, etc. — who can help the children process this information and serve as an additional means of support. Children may hesitate to share some things with their parents if they perceive the parents are still hurting from the abortion experience.

8) Respect your children’s right to grieve, and assure them that they are free to express their feelings and take the time to work through them. Parents should try not to place a burden of “needing to forgive” on their children or insist that they move on from the situation before they are ready.

9) Answer questions honestly and openly, giving your children as much information as they seem able to handle. Parents should never force children to hear information they don’t want to hear. Children will usually stop asking questions when they have received as much information as they can cope with at the moment. Parents also need to let

Continued next page

"I believe that many children are living in situations that are a direct result of the mother's abortion — single family homes, abusive families, etc.," Bonopartis said. "The children may feel that they are to blame for the emotional struggles of their parents. I know my sons felt that so much of their lives made sense once they knew about the abortion. Explaining how the abortion affected me cleared up the picture for them, and no matter how painful, I think it helped them."

The Importance of Discernment

Theresa Burke emphasized that parents should consider their child's level of maturity and ability to handle the situation. "Only a parent is qualified to discern whether or not their child has the emotional stability to deal with this kind of information," she said. "The decision to tell or not to tell is highly individual, personal, and should be considered only after deep discernment and prayer. No one knows your child better than you."

Some children simply may not be at an age where they can keep discussion of the abortion within the family.

"One child I knew was nicknamed 'The Times Herald,' because she was such a blabber mouth," Burke said. "Such a child could be tempted to broadcast this personal information to teachers, babysitters, and neighborhood friends."

Valeska Littlefield, who often speaks publicly about the abortion she had as a teen, said her nine-year-old daughter sometimes asked questions about her abortion at inopportune moments.

"I would simply tell her that now was not the time to talk about it," Littlefield said. "Parents need to be prepared that this might happen, especially with younger children."

Lisa DiFillipo, who had an abortion 11 years ago, said her family knows about her abortion and she is fine when her young daughter brings it up with relatives, "because this fact will always be a part of my life and I'm not trying to hide from it anymore." Parents who are concerned about privacy, however, should keep this in mind before talking about the abortion with a very young or talkative child.

One mother, who asked not to be named, said that she has decided not to tell her young children about her abortion, at least for now.

"I could never disappoint my children by letting them know that I went against everything I have taught them," she said. "If my daughter is ever in a position to need my input—she's eight now—I may have to release this information to her. But I really hope to be able to lead her in the right direction without having to share this information with her or anyone."

The Importance of Healing

Another important thing for parents to consider is how much healing they themselves have experienced, said Trudy Johnson, who went through an abortion and now works at Focus on the Family's Crisis Pregnancy Ministry.

"I have counseled women who have just 'come out of the closet,' who are barely out of denial themselves and think they need to

Tips, Continued from page 4

the children know that they can come back to discuss information later, but be prepared to monitor your children's reactions and address issues as they arise.

10) Stress that this is a "family issue" only, and not one to discuss with others outside the family—especially with young children who may be tempted to broadcast such news or ask questions at inappropriate moments.

11) *When the children are ready*, find a way that you as a family can acknowledge and memorialize the child lost to abortion. This might include a healing service or Mass for the family, visiting or placing a marker at a memorial for unborn children, planting a tree, etc.

immediately tell their other children," said Johnson, who holds a master's degree in counseling. "In these cases I always tell them no . . . If you are not really healed, I believe the news can come across as 'dumping' on them or being condemning. The whole 'telling' process shouldn't be a matter of dumping your grief or guilt, but rather, sharing your heart tenderly for truth's sake."

Johnson said that while telling one's child can be a step in the healing process, she doesn't recommend it unless the parent has gone through a post-abortion counseling class and worked through the pain.

Philip Ney and Theresa Burke both agree that unless telling a child right away is absolutely necessary (such as when the child has already guessed or discovered that an abortion took place), parents need to resolve their own conflicts and mourn the loss of the aborted child first. Otherwise, they will not be prepared to deal with the children's reactions in a healthy manner, and may communicate their own fears and unresolved issues to them.

"No one should ever tell their children about their abortion until they have experienced an intense healing process themselves," Burke said. "The most important thing children need to know is that they are loved and that the parent is stable. If a grieving parent went to a child with an abortion confession, it could be very threatening to the child if the parent has not been through a healing process themselves."

Many parents also say that the timing of an abortion confession is important. They say parents shouldn't "rush" the process, but carefully consider how and when to talk to their children, as well as how the children might be impacted by such news.

"I've run across many women who end up telling their daughters when they are facing the same experience of an unexpected pregnancy," Littlefield said. "Often the daughter will think that if mom did it and she is okay, then I need to do it too, or it is okay for me. I've seen other cases where there is a deathbed confession of abortion, which leaves the family with the aftermath and nowhere to turn to have their questions answered."

Bonopartis said that she has known of cases where women speak engage in public speaking about their abortions without telling their families or tell their families simply because they want to engage in public speaking.

“I think this can be a selfish motive—a way they are looking to ‘make up’ for their abortion or ease their own guilt,” she said. “This is a great injustice. Women also have to be prepared to allow their children to feel whatever they need to feel and to work through it, allowing the children to express themselves with no fear that they themselves will then be ‘unwanted.’ In this way, the children can feel that no matter what they say, they are safe and loved.”

Sharing the Past

Lisa DiFillipo, who had an abortion 11 years ago, said she chose to tell her daughter at a young age because of her involvement in post-abortion ministries.

“When my daughter was about six years old and I was speaking regularly about my abortion, I really felt that I needed to tell her,” she said. “Many think that is way too young, but I didn’t want to hear about it from someone other than myself.”

DiFillipo’s daughter is now eight, and her mother said she seems “to feel very comfortable” with the abortion issue.

“I tried to give her as much information as she wanted and then that was it until the next time,” she said. “She would think about it and let it sink in and then come back to me with other questions. I was always honest with her without giving her more than I felt like she could handle.

“I am happy and comfortable with the way I have done this. I plan to do my best to keep these lines of communication open so this never becomes a stumbling block for her.”

Sometimes children have already guessed or sensed that there was an abortion in the family, perhaps after having overheard a conversation or guessing that the mother was pregnant without a baby appearing. When Janet Hurguy told her teenage daughter about her abortion, her daughter responded by saying that she had often thought that there had been another child in the family. “She did not understand why she would think this but for some reason she did,” she said.

Another woman, Shelia, said she felt at first that telling her children about her abortion “put distance between us,” but she knew that her children needed time to work through the grieving process.

“At first it was very painful, but today I have absolutely no regrets about telling them,” she said. “I knew that the truth needed to be spoken; that I wanted them to understand what hell these abortions had caused me and to know the truth about what abortion does to a woman. I wanted to share about the redeeming love and mercy of God.”

Christine, who has told her teenage children about her abortion, acknowledges that while telling her children about the abortion

had painful consequences, she is glad she took that step.

“My children are coping with the knowledge of what I did, yet not without a struggle,” she said. “They sometimes asked me questions, which I answered to the best of my ability. But my second child still sometimes avoids the subject, looking away from me . . . My children and I still need more restoration. But at least a very important step has been made. An openness has been created and I’m very grateful to no longer have this terrible secret from my children.”

Other women, like Trudy Johnson, have chosen to wait until their children were adults before telling them of a past abortion. Johnson shared her story of telling her two grown sons in an article she wrote for *Focus Magazine* last January. Although she

struggled with fears about telling them, she wrote, the letter she received from one of her sons in response was “probably the most loving thing he has ever done for me.”

“Dear Mom,” her son wrote. “Thank you for being honest about this terrible thing . . . I know it must have been hard for you to share it with me, but honest, Mom, I hope you don’t think I would hate you . . . I feel so sad for our family. When I read your words, it was like all the puzzle pieces of my life fell into place. . . I always felt our family had a ‘missing piece’ . . . Our home had an emptiness, an inexplicable sadness. Now I know why.”

Helpful Hints

Valeska Littlefield feels it is important to give children an opportunity to grieve the loss of a sibling and make some tangible connection to the aborted child. She and her husband are planning to honor the memory of Littlefield’s child with a marker at the National Memorial for the Unborn in Chattanooga, TN, which has a “Wall of Remembrance” where grieving parents and family members can honor children lost to abortion. They have decided to let their oldest daughter choose the inscription for the marker.

“I’ve had the opportunity to grieve; this is her opportunity to make that connection,” Littlefield explained. “If I would have had a child who died after birth, I would have had photographs, something to allow our children to make a connection with her, but she doesn’t have that. This will give her that connection.”

Many parents say that prayer—both before and after talking with your children, if you choose to tell them—is key. “God will lead you to knowing the right time and giving you the right opportunity,” Hurguy said.

Christine agreed. “I would strongly recommend that those mothers who need to tell their children make sure to be surrounded by prayer, and also, if they are very much afraid to tell, that they would ask a very skillful person to be around so they can talk about how things went as soon as they can.”

Theresa Burke said that if a parent chooses to disclose an abortion, “it should be done within the framework of the Lord’s forgiveness and mercy—that even though something awful has happened,

Parents need their own healing before telling their children.

God has forgiven the person, and forgives all of us if we are sorry about what we did.”

Cecilia Brown said parents should tell their children that they can always come to you if they are facing an unplanned pregnancy.

“I told my daughter that if she became pregnant she could come to me; that I do understand—I have been there,” she said.

Bonopartis believes that in the end, telling her sons about her past abortion ten years ago has been healing for her family. “I know it was very painful for them, and although they support my work I know at times they still do not want to read things I have written or look at it too closely,” she said.

“Sometimes I still feel concern, but not very often. I am very proud of them . . . they can get sad, but I believe their reactions are healthy. It has also made them more effective in their own lives in speaking about abortion. They understand the impact . . . they have lived it.

“I think in the end it brought us closer together. It took time, and a lot of talking, but we worked through it. So much of their lives now makes sense to them. They understood finally why things were the way they were, and why I spent years crying.”

Bonopartis recently received an award for her work in post-abortion ministries. She said that she was nervous about her son attending the banquet with her because it was the first time that he was to hear her share her abortion story in public.

“From what I heard, my son was the first one on his feet clapping after I spoke,” she said. “To know my son was giving me a standing ovation after I had gotten up in front of 300 people with him in the

room and I had spoken about my own abortion and work—how can you beat that?”

* * *

Comments from Dr. Philip Ney are excerpted from the booklet “How to Talk With Your Children About Your Abortion: A Practical Guide for Parents,” by Philip G. Ney and Marie Peeters-Ney. For more information, contact IIPLCARR/Hope Alive by phone at (250) 391-1840, or email iiplcarr@islandnet.com.

South Dakota Kills Abortion Ban

A bill that would have banned most abortions in South Dakota has died after the state Senate refused to approve technical corrections that the governor wanted to be made to the bill.

Pro-life Gov. Mike Rounds had said he would sign the bill if legislators made changes to ensure that the state’s current restrictions on abortion would remain in place if the new ban was declared unconstitutional. The House voted to approve the changes, but the Senate did not, thus effectively killing the bill.

The votes came after the Senate added a “health” exception that some pro-life advocates said would have rendered the bill meaningless. The critics worried that doctors could use the health exception to get around the law, which would have made it a felony to perform an abortion unless there is a grave risk to the mother’s physical health..

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News Briefs

Suicide Rates Triple Among Young Women — Could Abortion Be a Factor?

The National Institutes of Health reports that suicide is now the third leading cause of death among American young people, and has tripled among teen girls and young women in the past 25 years — despite a drop in the overall suicide rate across the U.S.

One contributing factor in teen suicides may be abortion. An Elliot Institute study showed that compared to women who give birth, women who abort are 2.5 times more likely to commit suicide over the next eight years. More than half of all women having abortions are under the age of 25, and more than 20 percent are teens.

Woman Sues Planned Parenthood Over Botched Abortion

A woman is suing a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic because she had to undergo a hysterectomy following a botched abortion that perforated her uterus.

According to the lawsuit, Lorraine Thul underwent an abortion at Intermountain Planned Parenthood in Billings, MT, in May 2002 because of pregnancy complications. The lawsuit stated that the abortionist, David Healow, did not speak with Thul before the procedure and never asked her about her complications. Healow admitted that he had perforated Thul's uterus but did not tell her about it because he thought the tear was superficial.

The lawsuit also states that Healow did not follow medical protocol because he failed to inform Thul of the risks, and that she would not have sought an abortion from him if she had known he was an anesthesiologist and not a surgeon. Montana passed an informed consent law in the mid-1990's, but it was stuck down as unconstitutional.

Detroit Teen's Death Leads to More Questions About RU-486

Tamia Russell, a 15-year-old Detroit teen, died Jan. 8, the day after she told her family that she was six months pregnant and was in the midst of undergoing what some pro-life advocates say may have been an RU-486 abortion.

Russell's family said that she was given an abortion without their knowledge at WomanCare of Southfield, despite the state's parental notification law. If a chemical abortion took place, WomanCare violated its own policies limiting the use of RU-486 to the first 49 days of pregnancy. Four other RU-486 deaths have been recently reported in the U.S., Great Britain, and Sweden. An autopsy showed Russell died of the same type of uterine infection that led to the RU-486 death of 16-year-old Holly Patterson in September.

Court Grants Asylum to Victims of China's Coercive Population Control Programs

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that a Chinese refugee who fled to the U.S. after his wife was forcibly aborted should have been granted asylum.

Kui Rong Ma fled to the U.S. after Chinese population control officials performed a forced abortion on his wife, Lei Chiu Ma, whom he had married illegally. 1,000 U.S. asylum slots are open annually for women and their spouses fleeing coercive population control programs. The court ruled Ma couldn't be denied asylum simply because China does not recognize him as Chiu's spouse.

In February the court also ruled for asylum in a case where Chinese officials forcibly performed a gynecological exam on a woman and threatened to sterilize her boyfriend after learning that the couple planned to secretly marry.



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