



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

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Bioethics and Public Policy Report

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The *National Scene and the State of Conscience/Religious Liberty*: The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on the issue of religious freedom of secular businesses owned by persons who, based on their deeply held religious beliefs, oppose the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services *Contraceptive Mandate*.¹ ♦ Also see **Recent Good News**.

The State of Marriage: The *State Marriage Defense Act of 2014* has been introduced in the U.S. Congress “to ensure respect for State regulation of marriage,” which continually is being violated by judicial activism. ♦ The *Indiana* statutory definition of marriage as between one man and one woman, which the state’s Attorney General has agreed to defend, is facing a judicial challenge.² Similarly, the Governor of *Tennessee* is challenging a U.S. District Court ruling which found the state’s constitutional amendment, which defined marriage as between one man and one woman as unconstitutional.³ ♦ A woman who married her same-sex partner in Iowa is petitioning the *Nebraska* Supreme Court to be allowed to divorce.⁴

State by State: The *Missouri* House of Representatives has passed a bill to foster true informed consent before a woman undergoes an abortion. The bill would require a 72 hour waiting period, as well as the viewing of a video detailing what constitutes an *abortion*.⁵ ♦ The *Oklahoma* Senate has approved a bill that would prohibit individuals younger than age 17 from purchasing emergency contraception without a prescription.⁶ ♦ The *Pennsylvania* Legislature is considering a bill entitled the *Down Syndrome Prenatal Education Act*, also called “Chloe’s Law,” named after a child with Down Syndrome. The legislation would require health care practitioners to provide complete information to women who receive a prenatal diagnosis for Down syndrome, so that they are better informed with regard to the positive outcomes of giving birth to a child with Down Syndrome.⁷

Recent Good News: The *Missouri* Legislature has passed legislation requiring dual parental notification for an *abortion on a minor*.⁸ ♦ The *North Dakota* Catholic Conference welcomed the dismissal of a lawsuit challenging a 2013 law requiring *abortionists* to have admitting privileges at a local hospital. ♦ A U.S. federal appeals court has ruled that *Kansas* may enforce a state law that blocks access by *Planned Parenthood clinics* to federal family planning funds.⁹ ♦ The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit has ruled that a *Texas* law requiring abortion centers to follow FDA protocol when administering an abortion inducing drug (known as *RU-486*), and requiring hospital *admitting privileges for abortionists*, as constitutional.¹⁰ ♦ The *Massachusetts physician-assisted suicide* legislative proposal, to overturn the will of the people who voted in a referendum against such a measure in 2012,

has been stalled. The Public Health Committee voted that the bill be sent to a study committee, essentially ensuring no action will be taken before the end of the legislative session.¹¹ Similarly, the *Connecticut* bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide will not be voted out of the Public Health Committee this year.¹² ♦ *Genetic counselors* in *Virginia* will have conscience protection from legislation signed into law by *Virginia's* Governor.¹³ ♦ The Governor of *Indiana* has signed into law legislation that prohibits health insurance policies from *covering abortion*, except through a separate rider.¹⁴

Sharing Your Good News and Your Efforts: If there are public policy advocacy strategies which you wish to share with others, please e-mail mhilliard@ncbcenter.org.

Sharing of Resources: The web page of the National Catholic Bioethics Center is a significant resource in the realm of bioethics: www.ncbcenter.org. Also, bioethicists are on call twenty-four hours a day, every day of the week, for consultation by calling 215-877-2660.

¹ <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=20935>.

² http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/political-fix/missouri-house-gives-initial-ok-to--hour-wait-for/article_b7ac1d05-79b6-5983-b8b1-2af31b8dd7b7.html.

³ <http://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Tennessee-governor-appeals-same-sex-marriage-order-5328570.php>.

⁴ http://journalstar.com/news/local/same-sex-couple-asks-nebraska-court-to-allow-divorce/article_bffa26d7-2e1a-5154-961d-e719960c3df3.html.

⁵ http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/News2?abbr=daily2_&page=NewsArticle&id=43831&security=1201&news_iv_ctrl=-1.

⁶ http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/News2?abbr=daily2_&page=NewsArticle&id=43832&security=1201&news_iv_ctrl=-1.

⁷ <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=S&SPick=20130&cosponId=14266>.

⁸ <http://www.lifenews.com/2014/03/18/missouri-house-requires-teens-to-get-permission-from-both-parents-before-abortion/>.

⁹ http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/News2?abbr=daily2_&page=NewsArticle&id=43999&security=1201&news_iv_ctrl=-1.

¹⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/28/us/court-panel-upholds-texas-law-on-abortion.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&r=0>.

¹¹ <http://www.greenfieldreporter.com/view/story/50ba3e79b3eb4f2bacfddc9d3002cd47/MA--Assisted-Suicide>.

¹² <http://www.therepublic.com/w/CT--Assisted-Suicide>.

¹³ <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/03/virginia-conscience-clause-genetic-counselors-mcauliffe-abortion>.

¹⁴ ♦.