



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

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Bioethics and Public Policy Report

June 2015

The National Scene

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed a bill that protects unborn babies at 20 weeks of gestation from abortion, due to their ability to experience pain at that age: [Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act](#). ♦ The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has produced two excellent videos of authentic cases where physician-assisted suicide was not selected by those deemed to be terminal. See: [Maggie's Story](#); and [Jeanette's Story](#).

The State of Conscience and Religious Liberty

Please [take action today](#) in urging Congress to support our cherished rights of conscience and religious liberty. ♦ The Governor of North Carolina vetoed a bill which would have [allowed judges to recuse themselves](#) from performing same-sex marriages if by doing so they violate their religious beliefs.

The State of Marriage

The Governor of Florida signed into law a provision reversing Florida's ban on same-sex parent adoption that has not been enforced since 2010 when the Third U.S. District Court of Appeals ruled Florida's law prohibiting adoption based on sexual orientation to be unconstitutional. The Governor has called for legislation to protect the [religious liberty of adoption agencies](#) which recognize that children do best in a home with a mother and a father. ♦ Also visit the NCBC web page for the updated list of states' Status of Marriage: <http://www.ncbcenter.org/page.aspx?pid=1260>.

State by State

The Colorado Offenses against Unborn Children Act, to protect women from [violence that leads to the death](#) of their unborn babies, was defeated in that state's Legislature. ♦ The Florida Senate passed a bill requiring a [twenty-four hour waiting period](#) before an abortion can be performed. ♦ The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that [Idaho's law prohibiting abortions](#) after viability is unconstitutional. ♦ The Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles' refusal to allow "Choose Life" license plates [did not violate the Constitution](#). ♦ An Arizona law [enhancing informed consent](#) when a woman procures a medical abortion, by requiring providers to inform her of reversal procedures, has been enjoined pending judicial review. ♦ The California Senate [is considering legislation](#) that would mandate all Pregnancy Care Centers to tell mothers seeking care how to get an abortion but not alternatives like adoption. It also exempts abortion clinics from giving the same mothers the same information. ♦ The U.S. Supreme Court [declined to hear an appeal](#) of a lower court decision enjoining a North Carolina law requiring doctors to perform an ultrasound and describe the results to women before performing abortions.

Recent Good News

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation has published [a state-by-state guide](#) to State Late-Term Abortion Policies. It shows the growing number of protections for the unborn. ♦ The Maine Legislature has voted against the legalization of physician-assisted suicide, joining the legislatures opposed in CT, DE, MD, NH, UT, and WY. Proposals to legalize physician-assisted suicide are still before the following Legislatures: AK, CA, MA, MN, MT, NC, NJ, NY, PA, RI, TN, WI, and DC. ♦ The Iowa Legislature has passed a bill which will require abortionists to [offer to each mother considering an abortion an ultrasound](#) of their unborn baby. ♦ The Kansas Legislature has passed a law insuring that medically induced abortions [will not be accessed by "webcam"](#) without a licensed Kansas physician being on site. ♦ The North Carolina House of Representatives voted to [override Governor](#)

[Pat McCrory's veto](#) of Senate Bill 2, which will protect religious liberty of magistrates and town clerks from having to cooperate in same-sex marriages. The state Senate previously voted to override McCrory's veto, meaning that this important legislation now becomes law. ♦ After initially being denied, the Madero South Students for Life club in California officially [has been recognized by the school district](#), with the aid of the law firm of the Thomas More Society. ♦ The Michigan Legislature has passed a bill [allowing adoption agencies to determine](#) the best environment for a child and not make adoption decisions based on what some call the “right to a child” by adopting parents. ♦ The Governor of Louisiana has [issued an executive order](#) prohibiting the state from denying individuals, businesses and nonprofits any licenses, benefits, jobs or tax deductions because of action taken "in accordance with a religious belief or moral conviction" about marriage. ♦ The US Supreme Court has told the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to [reconsider its ruling](#) against the Michigan Catholic Conference, the Diocese of Nashville, and the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia’s right to religious liberty as it pertains to the US Department of Health and Human Service Contraceptive Mandate (HHS Mandate). ♦ The Governor of North Carolina signed into law a statute that provides true informed consent for women seeking abortion, by requiring a [72 hour waiting period](#). ♦ The U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals [ruled to uphold](#) the Texas’ state regulatory requirements that abortion clinics meet ambulatory surgical center standards, and for abortionists to have admitting privileges to a local hospital. ♦ The Governor of Texas has signed into law an amendment to the Texas Advance Directives Act, found in the Texas Health and Safety Code. This Code had allowed a hospital or physician to withdraw life-sustaining medical treatment, including food and water, against patient/family wishes, with only 10 days to seek another care provider. This provision [has been removed](#) unless such treatment is medically contraindicated or in violation of an expressed wish of the patient. ♦ [Texas also passed legislation](#) which reforms the procedures for judicial bypass of parental consent for abortions; provides information concerning support services for parents with a prenatal diagnosis of Down Syndrome; requires abortion providers to train to identify and assist victims of sex trafficking through measures that are alternatives to abortion; reduces public funding of Planned Parenthood while increasing funding for abortion alternatives; and prohibits abortion-providing agencies from conducting sex education in public schools. ♦ Minnesota has enacted legislation which requires families receiving a prenatal diagnosis of Edwards or Down Syndrome to be [provided with information concerning resources](#) from their medical professional. ♦ The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit granted a [motion to stay its decision](#) forcing Priest for Life to comply with the HHS Mandate. ♦ The [Louisiana Unsafe Abortion Protection Act](#) provision requiring abortionists to have admitting privileges to local hospitals has been upheld by a federal district court ruling.

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.