



NPR Memo Directs Journalists on How to Sanitize, Politicize Abortion Terminology

National Public Radio (NPR) recently published a [memo](#) to remind its journalists about the importance of sanitizing abortion language, so it does not appear that they are conceding to the pro-life view of the procedure as the violent murder of a pre-born baby. In the memo Mark Memmott, listed as NPR's supervising senior editor for standards and practices, noted that with the recent media attention given to abortion legislation in Georgia and Alabama, it was important to tutor writers new to the abortion debate on how to steer clear of certain terms used by pro-life writers.



Memmott started out by warning journalists to downplay the term “fetal heartbeat” when referring to legislation meant to protect the unborn, reminding them that “heartbeat activity can be detected ‘about six weeks into a pregnancy,’” citing previous NPR sources. “That’s at least a few weeks before an embryo is a fetus.”

Calling pro-life individuals “opponents,” Memmott advised his NPR journalists that they should never use the term “partial-birth abortion,” but should instead refer to the unspeakably brutal procedure inflicted on late-term, viable pre-born infants as “intact dilation and extraction” when referring to late-term abortions, which is, of itself, a forbidden term. Instead of “late-term,” pro-abortion writers are to refer to “a certain procedure performed after the first trimester of pregnancy.”

Also, Memmott advised, “NPR doesn’t use the term ‘abortion clinics.’ We say instead, ‘medical or health clinics that perform abortions.’” The point, Memmott explained, “is not to use abortion before the word clinic.” After all, such clinics “perform other procedures” in addition to dispatching pre-born babies.

As for the terms “pre-born,” “unborn,” or “baby,” Memmott’s advice here may be the most troubling. “The term ‘unborn’ implies that there is a baby inside a pregnant woman, not a fetus,” he writes, adding dismissively that “babies are not babies until they are born. They’re fetuses. Incorrectly calling a fetus a ‘baby’ or ‘the unborn’ is part of the strategy used by antiabortion [read: pro-life] groups to shift language/legality/public opinion.”

In response Tim Graham, director of media analysis at the Media Research Center, noted that the NPR/Memmott memo has nothing to do with re-enforcing journalistic objectivity, but is, instead, all about “using language to shift public opinion. It’s fascinating that liberals who are so exquisitely sensitive about the dignity and humanity of the ‘illegal immigrant’ — don’t use that term! — or the people denying their gender ‘assigned at birth’ can so easily dehumanize babies with the term ‘fetus.’”

Graham observed that, outside the issue of abortion, the term “baby” is almost always used to refer to a pre-born human. He offered the example of the world-renowned Mayo Clinic telling new parents “how



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 29, 2019

your baby grows and develops during the first trimester.”

In an op-ed piece for the *Washington Examiner*, Quin Hillyer wrote that “every single word-usage option” given by Memmott “is resolved in favor of language preferred by those who support liberal, widespread access to legalized abortion, against those who would further restrict the practice. Throughout the notice, the tone drips with contempt for pro-lifers.”

CBN News observed that Memmott’s pre-selected verbiage for NPR journalists “reveals two things: (1) Many in the media have already chosen their side and (2) those in the pro-abortion camp have a fundamental misunderstanding of the pro-life movement. It has nothing to do with suppressing a woman’s — a mother’s — ‘rights.’ Rather, the pro-life movement is about protecting the rights of the child who has not yet been born and is unable to defend his or her inalienable rights.”



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