



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 11, 2016

State Legislators Seek to Ban 2nd Trimester Fetal Dismemberment

Pro-life legislators in several states have proposed bills that would prohibit abortions that would involve extracting a living unborn baby in pieces from the uterus, typically done using instruments such as clamps and forceps. Such a bill under consideration in Mississippi uses wording borrowed from model legislation prepared by the Washington-based National Right to Life Committee, which describes the grisly procedure as “dismemberment abortion.”



Dismemberment abortions are commonly used in the second trimester of pregnancy.

ABC News cited an explanation of the proposed legislation from Mary Balch, the National Right to Life Committee’s (NRLC) director of state legislation, stating that the bills would not ban all dilation and evacuation (D&E) abortions. Such laws would still allow abortions in which the unborn child is killed before being extracted, which she said do not pose any greater health risk to the woman.

While NRLC’s model legislation does strive to minimize the most horrible aspects of dismemberment abortion, Balch’s explanation nevertheless ignores the many health consequences of any abortion. Among these aftereffects listed by AbortionFacts.com are “infection, excessive bleeding, embolism, ripping or perforation of the uterus, anesthesia complications, convulsions, hemorrhage, cervical injury, and endotoxic shock.” Additionally, “cervical damage from previously induced abortions increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth, and complications of labor during later pregnancies by 300-500 percent.”

Women undergoing an abortion also experience a wide range of adverse psychological effects. AbortionFacts.com notes:

In a survey of over 100 women who had suffered from post-abortion trauma, fully 80 percent expressed feelings of “self-hatred.” In the same study, 49 percent reported drug abuse and 39 percent began to use or increased their use of alcohol. Approximately 14 percent described themselves as having become “addicted” or “alcoholic” after their abortions. In addition, 60 percent reported suicidal ideation, with 28 percent actually attempting suicide, of which half attempted suicide two or more times.

Another important consequence of having an abortion is an increased risk of breast cancer. The link was explored in an article by Steve Mosher of the Population Research Institute posted by Life News.com on September 22, 2014. Mosher cited a finding reported by Brent Rooney, research director of the Vancouver, British Columbia-based Reduce Preterm Risk Coalition. Mosher wrote:

[Rooney] had found twelve recent studies in [Indian] medical literature, all carried out on the Indian subcontinent, that looked into whether there was a link between prior abortions and breast cancer. And all twelve found that women who had had prior abortions were at an increased risk of



developing breast cancer.

Going back to the anti-dismemberment abortion legislation under consideration in several states, Republican Rep. Sam Mims, chairman of the Mississippi House Public Health Committee, is sponsoring the proposal to ban the procedure, which he describes as “very graphic.”

“I believe that life begins at conception. To me, this is a baby, Mims was quoted as saying by ABC News. The legislation sponsored by Mims is House Bill No. 519, the Mississippi Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Abortion Act. After defining the various terms used in the legislation — which repeatedly uses the more descriptive “unborn child, rather than “fetus” — the bill summarizes its most important point:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, it shall be unlawful ... for any person to purposely perform or attempt to perform a ... dismemberment abortion and thereby kill an unborn child unless ... necessary to prevent serious health risk to the unborn child’s ...mother. (Footnote numbers removed for great readability.)

Similar legislation has been introduced in the West Virginia legislature. The House bill (H.B. 4004), the “Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Abortion Act,” would make it “unlawful for any person to purposely perform or attempt to perform a dismemberment abortion and thereby kill an unborn child unless necessary to prevent serious health risk to the unborn child’s mother.”

ABC News quoted a statement from West Virginia state Senator Ryan Ferns, the chairman of the Health and Human Resources Committee, which will take up an amended version of the proposed ban on February 11. The amended bill will specify that second-trimester dilation and evacuation procedures are illegal unless the physician first “creates demise or death” of the unborn baby. The restriction does not apply to emergency procedures.

“We’re not preventing a second-trimester abortion,” Ferns said. “We just don’t want an unborn child to have to go through the gruesome procedure of being ripped apart limb by limb while they’re still alive.”

The youngest baby ever to survive birth was born at just 21 weeks and six days into her gestation, before the fifth month of pregnancy, or in the second trimester. Therefore, these latest legislative proposals, while commendable for their intentions to protect an unborn baby from the pain and suffering caused by being hacked to pieces while still alive, admittedly do nothing to prevent second-trimester abortions of infants who may very well be able to survive outside the womb.

Of course, those who are committed to the cause of life favor protecting all life, from conception to natural death. Since this is a difficult objective to achieve in today’s political climate, some politicians who are pro-life have attempted the “half-a-loaf” approach — believing it is better to save some lives than none at all.

It is undoubtedly a difficult course for the pro-life politician to navigate. If 100-percent pro-life laws are impossible to pass (or survive the dictates of federal judges after passage), should they just do the best they can, under the circumstances?

What would make an important difference is better moral education of the electorate, the people who keep those politicians in office. It requires changing minds and changing hearts. Not only do pro-life politicians pass laws to protect the unborn, they also tend to appoint pro-life judges who will uphold those laws. Once an overwhelming majority of the population recognizes that all unborn life is human life, deserving of the same constitutional protections as all other citizens, abortion will once again



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became unthinkable — as it once was.

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