

Fetal pain

Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act would educate women on abortion's inhumanity



CODY SAIN

Throughout the trial proceedings of the Partial-Birth Abortion Act ban that have been in the news recently, the issue of fetal pain has been a recurring question.

Many of the doctors who have testified during the trials have stated their literal indifference as to whether any pain exists for a fetus when being aborted. This includes the April 8 testimony of Dr. Stephen Chasen, a plaintiff in the New York lawsuit.

In a dialogue with Judge Richard Casey, as reported by the U. S. Conference of Catholic

Bishops, Chasen stated that he does not know whether the abortion procedure hurts the baby, yet this does not stop him from performing an abortion. Also, when the judge asked if he has any "caring or concern for the fetus whose head you were crushing," Chasen responded, "No."

If Chasen and others are truly ignorant to or unconcerned with any pain that might be felt by the unborn child (and this is questionable), it is time for them to become informed and to start caring.

In May a new bill was introduced to the U. S. House of Representatives and Senate called the "Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act of 2004." Its goal is to educate and inform women and others about the reality of pain felt by children in the womb.

The bill, if passed, will require women who seek abortions after 20 weeks of gestation to be notified of the pain that the child will feel during the process.

It will likely draw criticism similar to that received by the Women's Right to Know Act recently passed in Texas. Abortion advocacy groups claimed that the act, especially a part of it which describes a possible link between abortion and breast cancer, is not about informed consent but intimidating women into not having abortions.

Again, though, it must be stated that for a woman to make the best possible choice, she must be fully informed.

Ever since the Women's Right to Know Act became law, Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas has stated on its Web site that it has always fully informed women of their options and all that happens during the abortion process. While this may be true to an extent, when the abortionists themselves are testifying to their indifference of whether an unborn child feels pain, it is unlikely that women are being informed about fetal pain.

Please note that neither the Fannin nor the Bryan Planned Parenthood abortion clinics perform abortions during the last 16 weeks and should not be affected by this act.

The findings of the act itself remove doubt in some people's minds about the possibility of the unborn child being able to

feel pain.

It states that expert testimony confirms that 20 weeks after fertilization, the baby can feel substantial pain.

On April 15, Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand, a professor of pediatrics in Arkansas, was quoted on usccb.org as saying that "based on multiple lines of evidence, I believe that fetuses beyond 20 weeks of gestation have the ability to feel pain." These "multiple lines of evidence" include the "anatomical development of the pain system during fetal life," the "physiological responses that may occur following a painful stimulus" and "the behavior that results from a painful experience."

The act also requires that mothers have the option of having anesthesia administered to the unborn child to reduce pain. This is similar to the Humane Slaughter and Animal Welfare Acts which require pain to be reduced for animals about to be slaughtered or euthanized.

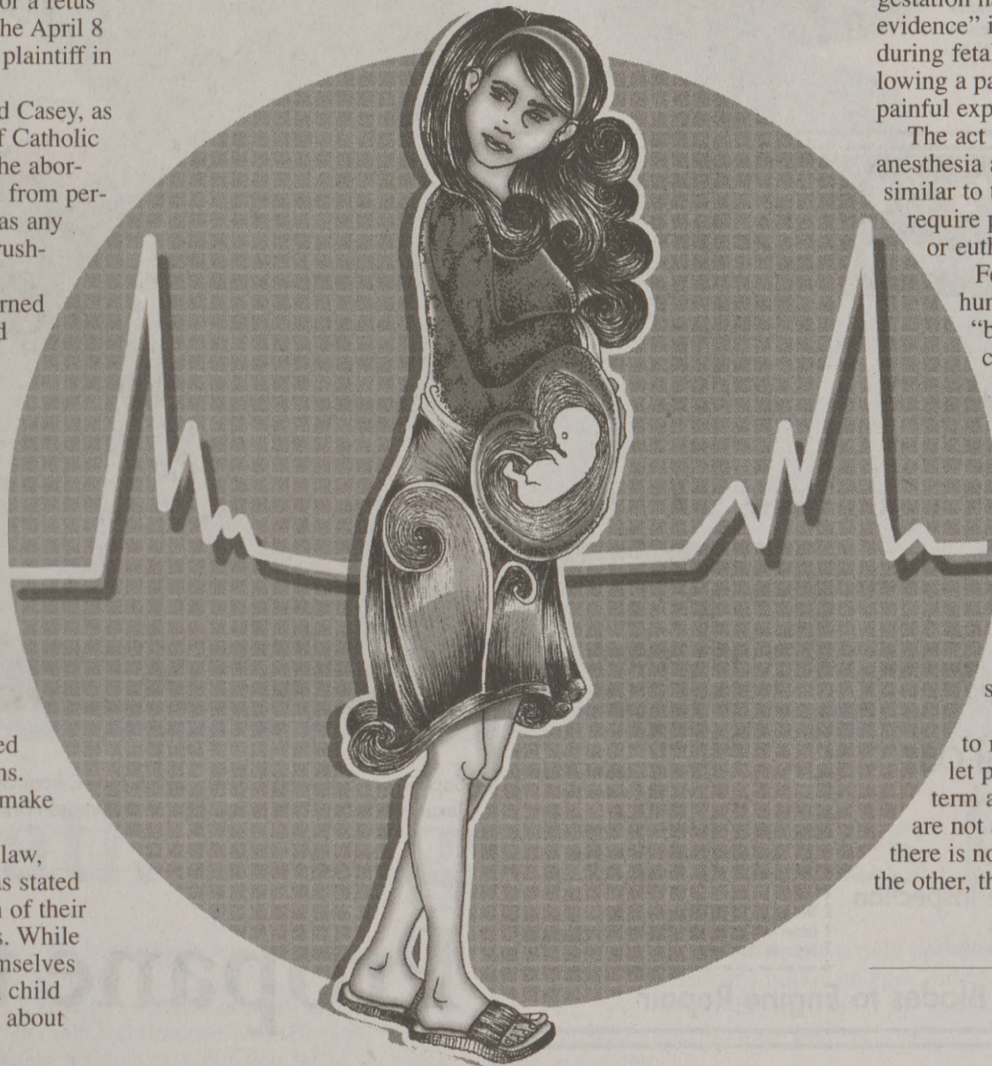
Few people would honestly say that a fetus is not a human. However, some might argue that it is not a human "being" or a "person," — words that to some have the connotation of including basic rights.

Therefore, if a fetus is indeed human, and there are accepted regulations to reduce the pain of slaughtered or euthanized animals, then any human, born or unborn, that will die has the right to have that pain reduced.

This is a tactic that has been used by opponents to capital punishment.

Their reasoning is that if something as horrible as executions will be done, they should at least cause as little pain as possible. Otherwise, why not return to publicly burning people at the stake, hanging them or sending them to the guillotine?

The Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act is not designed to restrict abortions, as some might decry. Instead it will let people, most importantly the women having the late-term abortions, know more about the procedure. If abortions are not as gruesome as those fighting against it claim, then there is nothing to fear from this type of legislation. One way or the other, the facts will speak for themselves.

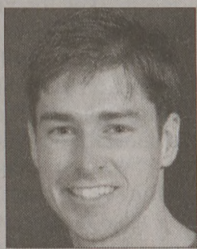


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Credible intelligence?

Constant changing of Terror Alert Level leaves people indifferent to warnings

The Attorney General and FBI director just announced that "credible" intelligence that soon, very soon, something awful is going to happen. But they don't know where or when exactly.



NICHOLAS DAVIS

Save yourselves! Take cover!

Hold on. The Head of Homeland Security just stated that no new intelligence exists regarding threats to our country. Please disregard the previous warnings. Nobody panic, go about your lives.

Does any of this sound familiar? It should, because it happened last week when Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller issued statements that new and "credible" intelligence indicated terrorists planned to "hit the United States hard" in the next few months.

At the same time, however, Tom Ridge made a television appearance and stated just the opposite.

Ridge claimed the government had not received any intelligence that differed substantially from the intelligence gathered in the past. Ridge further stated, "We could go back over the past two years and pick out threat reports of pretty much the same thing."

Does anyone else feel a bit uneasy about

this confusion?

In a way, it appears the U.S. government is completely out of sync and that there is really no way to prevent, or even forecast, future terrorist attacks. This is unacceptable. In a time when terrorism represents the greatest threat to America and the world, there is no excuse for the heads of U.S. security agencies to release conflicting statements practically simultaneously.

Clearly, government officials don't have the luxury of consulting an oracle prior to issuing statements; likewise, it's impractical to expect the government to prevent all future attacks. But the American people can and must demand that their government act in unison and issue statements in harmony with each other.

It is mistakes like these that will inevitably empower the terrorists more by making the U.S. government appear incompetent, thus causing the public to lose faith in it. As a result, future warnings that really are credible may be neglected.

To some extent this has already happened. Consider the color-coordinated Terror Alert Level. The system has become a joke. For example, how many vigilant Aggies checked the Terror Alert Level this morning? This is pre-

cisely the point; people have ceased to pay attention to it. Moreover, whatever paltry amount of respect the public had left for it was crushed when the color was not raised from yellow to orange following the alarming statements of Ashcroft and Mueller.

Of course this dilemma has fallen along partisan lines.

Some Democrats have claimed that the warnings were politically motivated for two reasons: 1) To scare voters into reelecting President George W. Bush because he appears tough on terrorists and 2) If an attack did transpire the Bush administration could escape culpability by saying, "See, we told you so."

It's tempting to subscribe to such conspiracy theory assertions, but something doesn't hold water. If this really was an attempt to increase support for Bush, why didn't Tom Ridge, a Republican appointed by Bush, go along with it? The most probable explanation is that he didn't know the statements were to be made.

As for the second assertion, it's anyone's guess.

Republicans and some Bush administration officials have issued a statement claiming that

"the Wednesday announcement by Ashcroft and Mueller was overblown and caused unnecessary public worry," according to Fox News.

Though such a statement may constitute backpedaling, it nevertheless is partially correct. It just lacks one crucial element: It's now obvious that a communication breakdown exists within the executive branch.

This point cannot be stressed enough; after all, this same problem, arguably, enabled the 9-11 attacks to transpire so smoothly. Damage control occurred days after the contradictions, as Ridge and Ashcroft tried to present a united front by echoing the same words, "We communicate every day. We talk every day. We collaborate our efforts every day."

Oh, they do? It must be quite common, then, for officials who communicate and collaborate daily to appear on television and present completely contradictory statements.

The Bush administration must rectify this problem quickly. Once Americans believe their government is unable to protect them, frightening times will replace the peace and prosperity we enjoy in our own country. Then the terrorists win.

Nicholas Davis is a senior political science major.

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MAIL CALL

Not all experts agree on global warming issue

In response to Mike Walters' June 2 column:

It's very frustrating to see somebody criticize an entire category of people (i.e., "Hollywood," "environmentalists," "the media," etc.) based on an incomplete understanding of the facts.

I agree that the film "The Day After Tomorrow" certainly does paint an oversimplified, sudden catastrophic picture of how global warming might affect the world some day. But nobody should assume that this portrayal of global warming is how most "environmentalists" or climate change experts understand the problem.

In fact, some climate experts and environmental organizations have already issued statements regarding the inaccura-

cies of the film. Nevertheless, any serious inquiry into the complex modeling of climate change being undertaken at academic and research institutions around the world will demonstrate the overwhelming scientific evidence in support of global warming (I suggest visiting the global warming Web sites of the EPA, NOAA or the United Nations for starters).

Walters attempts to prove how little evidence there is by stating that "17,000 scientists have signed the Oregon Institute Petition which states that there is no convincing scientific evidence" that humans have caused global warming or that any problem will exist in the foreseeable future. A closer examination of this petition should diminish the power of such a misleading statement.

The signers of the petition were not experts in the field of climate change (in

fact, the only qualification for signing the petition was a Bachelor's degree in science). Accompanying the petition in the mass mailing by the Institute were a reprint of a Wall Street Journal article and an unpublished scientific article that both suggested global warming was a myth, while the whole package was deliberately assembled to appear as a position statement by the National Academy of Sciences. In response, the Academy promptly stated that "the petition does not reflect the conclusions of expert reports of the Academy." Please listen to the experts who have devoted much or most of their careers to the study of climate change. Don't leave it to non-experts, misleading petitions or movie Web sites to formulate your opinions.

Robert Powell Graduate student



MIKE LUCKOVICH