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“Wrenching Politics” Concerning Stillborn Babies? A Sad, Sad, Commentary on Our Times

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Should stillborn babies be assigned birth certificates? That question is throwing some legislatures right in the middle of the conflict over abortion — and that is a tragic commentary on our times.

The San Francisco Chronicle reports that the California Senate is to consider Senate Bill 850, which would authorize the assignment of a “certificate of birth resulting in stillbirth” in appropriate cases. According to the paper, nearly 3,000 births in California result in stillbirth every year.

The special certificates are wanted by parents of stillborn babies.

These parents are required by law to bury or cremate their babies, and the infants are assigned death certificates. The absence of a birth certificate means that these babies, though named by parents on the death certificates, are not legally recognized as having been born. The parents of stillborn babies want birth certificates as a means of recognizing the personhood of their babies.

As the paper reports:

It is more than a piece of paper to many of the nearly 3,000 families that cope with stillbirth each year in California. They are anxiously watching Senate Bill 850, which would authorize the state to issue a “certificate of birth resulting in stillbirth.” It is headed to the Senate Health Committee on Wednesday for its first in a long line of hearings.

The bill’s path is not likely to be smooth, even though similar legislation already has passed in 18 states and is pending in seven others.

The national discussion about birth certificates for stillborns, which are being pushed by bereaved parents working with the MISS Foundation, has been mingled with the abortion debate. Pro-choice advocates have opposed the laws on the grounds that they could fuel the anti-abortion cause by acknowledging that an unborn fetus is a person.

There — a straightforward objection from abortion rights activists. If stillborn babies are granted birth certificates, that will acknowledge that these babies were persons.

From the paper’s report:

“We are absolutely sympathetic” with the families, said Planned Parenthood Vice President Yali Bair. “However, any time we deal with any legislation, we have to think big and think about unintended consequences.”

At issue is how stillbirth is defined. “It is important that elective terminations are not included in that definition,” Bair

said.

Could there be a statement more revealing of the logic of abortion? Yali Bair of Planned Parenthood wants us to “think big” about what such legislation might mean for her cause. She wants to ensure that “elective terminations” (meaning abortions) are not included in the definition of persons considered worthy of a birth certificate — or of a death certificate.

Here is the perverse logic of our times comes down to this: A baby stillborn in one hospital room is granted a birth certificate and a death certificate. The baby’s parents are required to bury or cremate the baby’s remains (true in all 50 states) and the baby is usually named.

Meanwhile, just down the hall, another baby of the same gestational age can be ripped apart in its mother’s womb and removed as unwanted biological material. That baby is not named, is not granted a death certificate, and is not listed among the hospital’s births. The insanity of this should be obvious to all.

Nevertheless, California Senate Bill 850, sponsored by Sen. Abel Maldonado, R-Santa Maria (Santa Barbara County), and Sen. Lou Correa, D-Santa Ana (Orange County), is expected to face considerable opposition.

Planned Parenthood says that we should “think big” when considering the issue. That is the last thing they should want. The more one thinks about this issue, the more the perverse logic of abortion breaks down into its essential ugliness and insanity. How can a baby be a person in one room and another of the same gestational age be declared as unwanted biomass down the hall? Why are the remains of one baby required by law to be buried or cremated while the remains of the other baby are taken out the door with the biological refuse?

You can be sure that Planned Parenthood doesn’t want you to “think big” about those questions.

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