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So Much for Conscience in Wisconsin

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Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle has vetoed a bill that would have expanded that state's medical conscience clause to allow medical professionals to "opt out" of participating in certain medical procedures such as removing a patient's feeding tube or using technologies that involve the destruction of a human embryo.

According to the Associated Press, *Under current state law, medical workers already can opt out of abortions and sterilization procedures on moral or religious grounds without fear of reprisal from their employers or state examining boards and licensing agencies. The bill laid out six more procedures medical workers could refuse for ethical objections: destroying embryos or using cells from destroyed embryos; procedures on an embryo that won't benefit it; procedures involving a child growing in an artificial womb that don't help the child; procedures, such as transplants, that use fetal organs; pulling a feeding tube from a person who isn't terminally ill; and assisting in a suicide.*

According to the Governor's letter to legislators, "Medical decisions should be made by the patient and the doctor based on what's best for the patient, not on the doctor's political views." Political views? Is the Governor seriously suggesting that a physician's understanding of fetal organs and assisted suicide — or any of the other moral questions addressed by this bill — is merely *political*?

The Governor's veto is unconscionable. Legislative leaders see little hope for an effort to override the veto but pledge to bring the bill back in the next session.

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