

Life Cases Go to Supreme Court without Scalia

Texas Case, Little Sisters of the Poor to Be Heard This Month

Abortion supporters are hoping Justice Kennedy will vote with four other justices to throw out the Texas law, which would impact 25 other states that have passed similar abortion controls. Pro-life group Americans United for Life said that the Texas case is an opportunity for the court to back sensible health and safety regulations in the first trimester of pregnancy.

The Texas law's provisions mandate that abortion clinics meet the standards of outpatient surgical facilities, and require abortion doctors to hold admitting privileges to a hospital within 30 miles, in case any emergency were to arise. [*Wall St. Jnl*, 2/26/16]

The Executive Director of the Legal Center for Defense of Life, attorney Andrew L. Schlafly, submitted an *Amicus* brief, as did a number of other groups, in support of the Texas law. He argues that a state may properly prohibit abortion clinics from shirking their responsibilities by **requiring their doctors to have admitting privileges to area hospitals**.

The Little Sisters of the Poor were joined by many others such as two prominent women's organizations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the American Islamic Congress, 207 members of Congress, 50 Catholic theologians, and 9 professional associations, hoping for a favorable decision from the high court because they cannot bring themselves to permit the federal government to **distribute abortifacients and contraceptives to their employees**, something that goes against fundamental Catholic doctrine.

"We Little Sisters are indebted to every one of the groups and individuals who submitted amicus briefs on our behalf. ... I am particularly grateful to our Southern Baptist friends for clearly articulating that 'a fundamental aspect of Christian doctrine is its requirement that faith must govern every aspect of a Christian's life, and that Christians have a spiritual obligation to interact with and influence the culture outside the church doors.'" [Sister Constance Veit, CatholicBeaconPatersonDiocese.org. 2/25/16]

If this summer's Supreme Court decision favors the government's mandate, how will the Church respond? Will each institution be left to decide whether to comply or face bankrupting fines? **The need for a national strategy by church leaders** is growing more urgent with every passing day. [*Our Sunday Visitor*, 1/24/16]

Zika Outbreak Raises Moral Questions

The Zika virus in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Puerto Rico, is transmitted by mosquito and also by sexual intimacy from an infected person. Health officials are exploring a possible link to babies born with a rare defect called microcephaly and the Guillain-Barre syndrome.

Zika's harshest impact has occurred during the first trimester of pregnancy, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It said: "If you are pregnant, avoid traveling to a place where Zika is spreading." Men who have traveled to a Zika region should use condoms with any pregnant partner upon their return, or abstain from sex entirely.

The Church teaches that every single human being deserves protection by law. The prenatal human beings who may be adversely affected by Zika should be treated with care, concern and compassion rather than killed in order to "solve" the problem. We need to attack the problem, not destroy the person. Catholics defend the right of every innocent human being, even those not yet born, even those with serious handicap. **The Church supports the call to couples to avoid pregnancy during this crisis.** El Salvador's health ministry said: "We'd like to suggest to all the women of fertile age that they take steps to plan their pregnancies and avoid getting pregnant between this year and next."

In response to calls for **"therapeutic abortion"** as a humane response to an expected rise in birth defects, Honduras' Cardinal Maradiaga said that so-called "Therapeutic abortion doesn't exist. Therapeutic means curing, and abortion cures nothing. It takes innocent lives." Pope Francis received lots of media reporting when he said emergency conditions may permit contraception on a temporary basis. He said: "Abortion is not the lesser of two evils. It is to kill someone in order to save another. This is what the Mafia does. It is a crime, an absolute evil. ... Avoiding pregnancy isn't an absolute evil." Catholics under specific circumstances could make a conscience-based decision to delay pregnancy. [*Wall St. Journal*, 2/10/16 & 2/24/16; *Newark Star-Ledger*, 2/27/16; *Our Sunday Visitor*, 2/21/16; *National Catholic Register*, 2/21/16.]

Legos for Life !

A Lego character in a wheelchair, spotted at the recent Nuremberg toy fair, will go on sale in June. In its small way, it will help to improve attitudes towards disabled children and their families. [*Nat. Catholic Register*, 2/21/16]

A Major Epidemic No One Talks About

That's what Catholic therapist Peter Kleponis said about pornography. The largest users are tech-savvy children ages 12-17, and 70% of unmarried men.

"With modern technology, **all high school students have immediate access to pornography**," said Fr. Sean Kilcawley, director of Family Life for the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska. "Regularly viewing it leads to a distortion in how they see themselves and each other and is an obstacle to embracing Christ."

The *Journal of Communications* published an analysis of 22 different studies across 7 countries on pornography, stating that those who view porn are much more likely to rape and use sexual harassment and intimidation to obtain sex. Pornography use was found to be associated with increased acts of sexual aggression.

The U.S. Bishops recently issued *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography* that discusses the **Church's teaching on human sexuality**, porn and its effects, and provides resources to help the addicted.

The bishops note that porn use can destroy the ability to have healthy relationships and successful marriages, and is connected to "adultery, domestic violence, the abuse of children in child pornography, and sex trafficking. It also can be **implicated in contraception use and abortion**, promotes and even celebrates promiscuity, and views sexuality as devoid of love or openness to new life."

In his practice, Kleponis regularly sees the effect of porn addiction, including broken marriages, lost jobs (as employees are fired for looking at porn on work time and using work technology), promiscuity, STDs and unwanted pregnancies. The addiction drives viewers to ever more intensive experiences. **He recommends users to get involved in a recovery program.**

The U.S. Bishops website, usccb.org/cleanheart, includes a list of support groups and recovery programs, advice and resources for parents, preaching resources for clergy, internet filtering tools to block porn content, and other educational resources.

We have the facts. We have the research. We now have a fresh action plan from our bishops. What are we going to do about it? We need to speak up and let our brothers and sisters know that when it comes to the pornography plague, there is hope, healing and help available. [*Our Sunday Visitor*, 1/3/16 & 1/31/16]

Is Your State Pro-Life?

Americans United for Life released its 2016 "Life List," based on pro-life legislation initiatives. The top 10 pro-life states were: Oklahoma, Kansas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Indiana, North Dakota, Missouri and Texas.

The states that are **least protective of women and children** against abortion-industry abuses are: Washington, Vermont, New Jersey, California, Oregon, Nevada, New York, Hawaii, Connecticut and Wyoming.

"The momentum for creating a culture that respects life in the law increases each year," said Charmaine Yoest, CEO of AUL. "This is a historic time for life. More life-affirming and protective state laws have been enacted since 2010 than in any similar period since *Roe v. Wade*."

Positive developments among the states reflects strong pro-life views, even among those who consider themselves "pro-choice," according to a new poll. There is a very real consensus of Americans "who favor substantial restrictions on abortion; a consensus who sees abortion as morally wrong and ultimately harmful to women," said Patrick Kelly of the Knights of Columbus. More than 80% of poll respondents, taken by Marist Polling, supported **limiting abortions to the first trimester of pregnancy**. Two-thirds of identified "pro-choice" respondents had the same view.

- 68% opposed public funding of abortions with tax money, as did **51% of pro-choice respondents**
- 61% supported banning abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy, except in cases of danger to the mother's life
- 62% of pro-choicers also supported this limit
- 55% said that abortion "ultimately does a woman more harm than good"
- 60% said abortion is "morally wrong"
- 76% of **millennials** favored first trimester limits
- 65% of millennials opposed taxpayer funding of abortion
- 62% of millennials supported a 20-week abortion ban.

[*National Catholic Register*, 2/7/16]

Voter Guide Alert:

Not all issues carry the same weight. From a Catholic perspective, religious freedom, abortion, euthanasia, and embryonic stem-cell research are non-negotiable. Other issues are important, such as gun control, death penalty, immigration, health insurance and economic policy, but with them there is a lot of leeway.

Resources

Crisis pregnancy: many caring people are ready to help mother and unborn child: www.care-net.org

Abortion regret: for those who regret their involvement in abortion: www.silentnomoreawareness.org