

## Supreme Court to Rule on Biggest Abortion Case of the Decade

### Biggest Potential Impact Since *Roe vs. Wade*

In what could be a huge abortion legal battle, the US Supreme Court agreed to decide on the Texas abortion regulation law. The case will have far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for women's health. It will determine whether the unregulated, unaccountable abortion industry will be able to continue business as usual.

The Supreme Court's decision on the case will set an important precedent for the amount of oversight states will be allowed to have over the abortion industry. The recent videos revealing the Planned Parenthood organ harvesting scandal are just one example of how the **abortion industry needs greater oversight and accountability**, not less.

The 2013 Texas abortion regulations require that all clinics adhere to basic facility standards set for an ambulatory surgical center, and that **abortionists have admitting privileges to a near-by hospital** in the event that life-threatening complications should arise. Most Texas abortion clinics have since shut down because they were unable, or unwilling, to comply with these **basic health regulations**.

Allowing abortion businesses to operate otherwise clearly places mothers' health at risk, reduces the standard of women's health care, and jeopardizes countless unborn lives. In some circumstances, induced abortion can permanently harm a woman's health and can place her life at risk; and abortion becomes increasingly more risky for the mother at later gestations.

According to a 2014 study published in *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, the journal of the (pro-abortion) American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, mothers who had a legal abortion in the 11th and 12th weeks of gestation were **more than three times more likely to die** from the procedure than mothers who had their legal abortion in the eighth week or earlier, and were up to 30 times more likely to die if the abortion was done between the 16th and 20th week.

Further, maternal health in Texas is unlikely to be affected as a result of fewer clinics. According to the U.S. CDC, between 2003 and 2007 maternal mortality rates in North Dakota, with only one abortion clinic, were among the lowest in the country. It would seem that arguments against basic regulations for abortion clinics have been largely rooted in ideology rather than science.

The U.S. abortion industry is among the least regulated in the world. In **Sweden**, a largely pro-abortion country that gives more money to Planned Parenthood than any other nation, **abortion is only legal up to 18 weeks gestation** unless the life or health of the mother is at serious risk. The gestational limit in Sweden is in fact stricter than Texas' which allows abortion for any reason up to 20 weeks. Swedish women who want to have an abortion after 12 weeks are required to receive counseling before having an abortion and after 18 weeks, women have to make a case before the National Board of Health and Welfare before they can receive permission to have an abortion.

Based on recent rulings, **there is fear** that the Supreme Court will rule against the Texas law. Yet it may be that public opinion could play a large role in determining the outcome of the case. According to a Gallup poll earlier this year, the vast majority of Americans are unsatisfied with the nation's abortion regulations. Only 39% of Americans were satisfied with the extent of regulations on average between 2012 and 2015, a rate that may be lower now as sentiment has been trending downwards. [Source: Jon. Abbamonte, *Population Research Institute* newsletter, 11/19/15, pri@pop.org]

### U.S. Bishops Approve Revised Voter Guide for 2016

Among the features of the U.S. bishops' fall assembly in Baltimore was a revised voter guide for Catholics, referencing a number of key issues such as **abortion and euthanasia as "intrinsic evils"** that must always be opposed by Catholic voters, and opting for strong language opposing "same-sex" unions.

Not only are the bishops concerned about protecting the right of Catholics and other believers to oppose changes in the nation's marriage laws, they fear newly proposed anti-discrimination statutes that would include gender equality and transgender people.

The bishops also overwhelmingly approved the USCCB's new pastoral statement "Create in Me a Clean Heart: **A Pastoral Response to Pornography**", the first formal document focused exclusively on pornography's detrimental effects on nearly all members of society, in one way or another. (See **USCCB's website**.) Bishop Malone stated: "So many people are in need of Christ's abundant mercy and healing." [*National Catholic Register*, 11/29/15]

## Callous Disregard for Women

Dr. Charmaine Yoest, president of American United for Life (AUL), wants to alert the American public to “the abortion industry’s widespread and callous disregard for women’s health and safety.”

She noted that over the last six years, more than 150 abortion providers in at least 30 states and Washington, DC, have **faced investigations, criminal charges, administrative complaints and lawsuits** related to their substandard operations. Arguably, the most notorious example is the case of Kermit Gosnell, a Philadelphia abortionist convicted in 2013 of murdering three babies who were born alive after attempted abortion procedures.

In light of documented abortion industry abuses, AUL said state legislators have responded by passing new health and safety standards. Currently, **29 states have various laws regulating abortion facilities**, and six of these states require abortion clinics to meet the same health and safety standards as facilities performing other outpatient surgeries. [Brian Fraga, *Our Sunday Visitor*, 11/29/15]

## Little Sisters Before the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court will hear legal challenges to a federal mandate, brought by numerous schools, dioceses and non-profit groups including the Little Sisters of the Poor.

At the center of the controversy is a federal rule that requires most employers to provide employee health-care plans that cover **birth control, sterilization and drugs that can cause early abortions**. After the initial outcry, the administration announced revisions in the form of a religious “accommodation”: nonprofits that oppose the mandate may sign a form notifying insurers of their objections. In turn, the insurance companies would pay for the coverage. But more than 300 plaintiffs have filed lawsuits, saying that this rule still forces them to cooperate in actions that they believe are immoral. Further, they believe **insurance firms will eventually pass on these extra costs** to customers. [National Catholic Register, 11/29/15]

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But does the federal government have a right to define what constitutes a Catholic organization? The administration says that Catholic groups that hire and/or serve non-Catholics cannot be considered a Catholic entity such as a Catholic church. Because the **Little Sisters serve every needy person**, Catholic or otherwise, they are deemed “not a Catholic institution” to qualify for an exemption. At stake are conscience rights, religious liberty, and the continued existence of Catholic non-profits. [Catalyst, journal of the Catholic League, Dec. 2015]

## Has God Forgiven Me?

“Over 40 years ago, I had an abortion because that pregnancy was inconvenient for me. In adulthood, I had two children, had been away from the church for many years, and was diagnosed with breast cancer. I confessed this sin during a parish mission, but **do not feel forgiven**. Will God ever forgive me? Are my health issues punishment for having an abortion?”

**Answer from Fr. Pat:** “Yes, God forgave you when you sincerely made confession. You cannot change your past. But we gradually become what we choose to do on a regular basis. By your decisions today and tomorrow, you can make that tragic decision less and less typical of your life.

Although a human life is definitely lost to abortion, **no sin is too great for God’s forgiveness**. With God’s help, you can forgive yourself. Project Rachel (888-456-4673) is a ministry to women and men whose lives have been disrupted by abortion. They have many resources, including special retreats for women who have had abortions.” [StAnthonyMessenger.org, Nov. 2015]

*God has entrusted spouses with the extremely important mission of transmitting human life. This service to God has always been a source of great joy, although the joys are, at times, accompanied by not a few difficulties and sufferings.*

Pope Paul VI, **Humanae Vitae: A Challenge to Love**, 1968

## Legal Center for the Defense of Life

The Legal Center is one of a number of lawyer-based groups that is dedicated to the defense of all citizens who are unfairly or unjustly treated with respect to life issues. Other groups include the Thomas More Law Center, Americans United for Life, the American Center for Law and Justice, and Alliance Defending Freedom.

One of the current cases being handled by the Legal Center is a **challenge to a town’s restrictive ordinance** regarding access to public sidewalks in front of health care facilities. Another is a medical malpractice law suit regarding the **death of a young woman** during an abortion performed at a New Jersey hospital.

The Legal Center also handles requests for help from sidewalk counselors, crisis pregnancy centers, and other pro-life activists with legal questions or concerns. Volunteers interested in helping the Legal Center, or individuals who are in need of assistance, may contact Executive Director Andrew Schlafly, Esq., by email at [aschlafly@aol.com](mailto:aschlafly@aol.com).