

Governor Wrongly Targeted Over Law **SB 30 - Informed Consent**

The recent tempest in a chamber pot over the Governor's signing of SB-30 "Informed Consent" indicates how lacking his critics are for real issues to fuss about. The assembled choir of Political Correctness Inspectors (PCIs) is poking about with a magnifying glass to find more stones to cast. As the authors and sponsors of this legislation, we expected to be criticized by the abortion industry and those who refuse to acknowledge that abortion raises profound basic human rights issues, but strangely, there have been no arrows shot at us. Dragging our besieged Governor into this issue uses a tortured logic trail that is difficult to follow.

On the "Informed Consent" issue itself, we believe that offering a State-sponsored web page, as an optional alternative to the information that the abortion provider supplied, was a "change in abortion policy." Since the 1970's, Alaska has required the patient be advised of the medical implications and possible emotional effects, if she means to "terminate her pregnancy." The new law puts this and other updated information—lists of abortion providers, supports, and options, including adoption—out there on the Internet for Alaskans to access at their convenience. The law also provides some immunity against lawsuits if the State information is utilized. Several providers saw this provision as attractive given the high cost of liability insurance for Ob-Gyn doctors.

During extensive legislative hearings of SB 30 in both houses over two sessions, some Alaskan women testified they were not adequately informed and had suffered regrets for many years. Most women with unplanned pregnancies face very difficult times and are often under supported, even by the father of their unborn child. There are several very effective support groups operating in our state to support these women, and her child, if she does not choose abortion. We believe it is valuable and responsible to make sure that women have access to this information.

"Informed Consent" portions of our laws are increasingly important, as the Superior Court recently struck down the Parental Consent Law requiring girls under 17 to have parental involvement in this life-altering decision.

The expressed concern that the State-provided information would be "biased and designed to shame the woman" is an insult to the professionals in the health department and medical industry who will determine the content of the website. Today's women are informed and in control of their lives in ways unprecedented in human history. To infer that more information, required to be "scientific and unbiased," will insult or damage women is offensive and ridiculous. We object.

When the Pennsylvania Informed Consent law was upheld in the landmark "Casey" decision, the U.S. Supreme Court declared, "In attempting to ensure that a woman comprehend the full consequences of her decision, the State furthers the legitimate purpose of reducing the risk that a woman may elect an abortion, only to discover later, with devastating psychological consequences, that her decision was not fully informed. If the information the State requires to be made available to women is truthful and not misleading, the requirement may be permissible...calculated to inform the woman's free choice, not hinder it."

Gov. Murkowski has not wavered in his opposition to permissive abortion for all of his years in public office. He undoubtedly saw SB 30, as we, the sponsors, did—as a small step to ensuring that women were empowered by good information at this critical point in their lives, rather than as a change to the State abortion policy. How this action resulted in his being targeted for criticism defies understanding. If you don't like women having comprehensive information on abortion and its consequences, throw the mud at us.