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SB 46

Testimony of Roger Koopman

SB 46, House Judiciary Committee
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MR. CHAIRMAN. I would like to begin by respectfully addressing those committee members who regard themselves as "pro-choice." Have you ever signed a petition to put an initiative on the ballot, even though you may not agree with the proposition itself? I have. Why would one do this? Because greater than our own personal opinion of the measure, is our abiding belief in the people's right to choose – particularly with regard to important public policy where public opinion runs strong and deep.

I would suggest to the pro-choice members of this committee that SB 46 is first and foremost pro-choice legislation. It affords people the right to vote, the right to choose on perhaps the most important public policy issue of our day. In the spirit of the people's right to choose, I appeal to you to support this bill.

To those committee members who remain somewhat unsure on the abortion issue, I can only share with you, in brief, my reasons for supporting this bill. It begins with the fundamental question of human life. Are we in fact talking about "human life?" The answer to that question will determine your vote on this measure.

First, is an unborn person "human?" Well, is it genetically something other than human? A plant, perhaps? A lower life form? An arachnid? A cephalopod? Or perhaps another form of mammal, like a dog or a grizzly bear? This, of course, is absurd. The unborn person is as genetically human as you and I. It is not subhuman or pseudo-human. It is human. I challenge any member of this committee to prove otherwise.

If it life? Well, if it is living, it is life. Is the unborn person living, or is it dead? Is it an inanimate object? Of course not. It's not dead. It is very much alive. It is life.

It is human. And it is life. Human life. The unborn person is human life.

And on this next point, all of us must agree. Human life possesses human rights. The first and most basic human right is the right to life itself, and the most fundamental role of civil government is the protection of human life, from violence and deadly force.

The measure of a civilization's claim to civility, decency and dignity is not how much it defends the powerful, but how much it defends the weak, the powerless – those without vote or voice. The innocent and vulnerable life in a mother's womb. That is what Senate Bill 46 endeavors to do.

Any society – including ours – that claims to be civilized, must put life first. Life trumps self interest. Life trumps property. Life trumps prosperity. Life trumps privacy. Life comes first.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, a personal note. It is impossible for me to address this issue without putting a human face to it. I encourage committee members to lay aside their abstract philosophies and theories, and do the same. We should begin by putting a human face to the 2,000 kids whose lives end each year in Montana, before they have a chance to be born. Those victims of abortion in 2004, for example, would be 4 and 5 year olds now, walking among us. Filling this chamber and the halls of this capitol. Not statistics, Not numbers. Real human beings, with real smiles, real frowns, real tears. There's nothing very abstract about that.

I am haunted by their images. From the tiny hands called "the products of abortion" to the little hands taking a bubble bath, playing catch in the back yard, buying a Christmas present for Daddy, licking frosting off their birthday cake. The hands of a 12-year old playing in the band. A 16-year old primping for the prom. And 18-year old tearfully hugging her parents goodbye as she heads off to college for the first time.

These children could be among us, and would be among us, if Senate Bill 46 became constitutional law. To my way of thinking, that's not such a bad thing.