



H.B. 351

123rd General Assembly
(As Introduced)

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BILL SUMMARY

- Creates the offense of partial birth infanticide.
- Creates a cause of action against the person who commits the offense of performing partial birth infanticide.
- Repeals the offense of performing an unlawful abortion procedure, which was held to be unconstitutional in *Women's Medical Professional Corp. v. Voinovich* (S.D. Ohio 1995), 911 F. Supp. 1951 (*aff'd* (6th Cir. 1997), 130 F.3d 187, and *cert. denied* (1998), 118 S. Ct. 1357).
- Repeals the cause of action against the person who commits the offense of performing an unlawful abortion procedure.

CONTENT AND OPERATION

Partial birth infanticide

Prohibition and penalty

The bill prohibits a person from doing both of the following, except when necessary to save the life of the mother when the mother's life is endangered by a physical disorder, illness, or injury or when the mother's life is endangered by a problem occurring during an abortion or delivery:

(1) Purposely causing the partial birth of a living child for the purpose of killing the child when the child is partially born;

(2) After the partial birth of the child, purposely killing the child by a second overt act that is performed when the child is known to be a living child and is known to be partially born.

A person who violates this prohibition is guilty of partial birth infanticide, a felony of the second degree. (Sec. 2919.151(B) and (C).)

Exception

A pregnant woman whose child is killed as a result of a violation of the prohibition is not guilty of committing, attempting to commit, complicity in the commission of, or conspiracy in the commission of a violation of the prohibition (sec. 2919.151(D)).

Definitions

As used in the section creating the offense of partial birth infanticide (sec. 2919.151(A)):

"Body" of a living child does not include the umbilical cord or the placenta.

"Emerged from the body of the child's mother" or "removed from the body of the child's mother" means that the portion of the child's body in question is beyond the mother's vaginal introitus in a vaginal delivery or beyond the mother's external abdominal wall in a caesarean delivery.

"Living child" means a member of the human species who has a beating heart.

"Partial birth" or "partially born" means that either of the following attached portions of the body of a living child, but not the entire body of a living child, have emerged or have been removed from the body of the child's mother: (1) in a cephalic presentation, at least the child's entire head, or (2) in a breech presentation, at least the lower torso of the child to the navel.

Civil action

Under the bill, a woman whose child is killed by partial birth infanticide, the father of the child if the child was not conceived by rape, or the parent of the woman if the woman is not 18 years of age or older at the time of the commission of the offense has and may commence a civil action for compensatory damages,

punitive or exemplary damages if authorized by the Punitive and Exemplary Damages Law, and court costs and reasonable attorney's fees against the person who committed the offense. The action must be brought within one year after the violation of the prohibition against partial birth infanticide.

If a judgment is rendered in favor of the defendant in the civil action and the court finds, upon the filing of a motion under the Frivolous Conduct Law, that the commencement of the civil action constitutes frivolous conduct and that the defendant was adversely affected by the frivolous conduct, the court must award to the defendant reasonable attorney's fees in accordance with that Law. (Secs. 2305.11(C) and 2307.53.)

Purpose clause

The bill contains a purpose clause that states that the General Assembly declares all of the following (Section 3 of the bill):

(1) In enacting sections 2307.53 (partial birth infanticide) and 2919.151 (the civil action), its intent is to prevent the unnecessary killing of children when they are substantially outside the body of the mother.

(2) This intent is based in part on a state interest in maintaining a strong public policy against infanticide, regardless of the life expectancy or stage of development of the child.

(3) The right to abortion established in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), 410 U.S. 113, was never intended to legitimize infanticide or to deprive the state of all ability to protect children who are substantially outside the body of the mother.

(4) The General Assembly finds that some physicians, rather than performing a standard abortion that is intended to kill the fetus as a result of actions taken while the fetus is still in the woman's body, have performed procedures that involve the deliberate delivery of an attached substantial portion of the body of the living child from the woman's body for the purpose of causing death after the child is partially born, a form of infanticide.

(5) The act also furthers the state interest in preventing unnecessary cruelty. This interest is not necessarily based solely on the ability of the fetus or child to experience pain. The indignity of being partly delivered before being deliberately killed is also a form of cruelty that should not be unnecessarily inflicted upon any being of human origin. Therefore, there are legitimate reasons for deterring the unnecessary use of partial-birth infanticide, even though painful abortion procedures remain available.

"Person" under the Criminal Code and unlawful termination of another's pregnancy in the Criminal Code

Existing law

Generally, in any section of the Criminal Code that sets forth a criminal offense, "person" includes an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, and association and an unborn human who is viable.¹ Notwithstanding this definition, in no case is the portion of the definition of the term "person" that includes an unborn human who is viable permitted to be applied or construed in any criminal prohibition in the Criminal Code in any of the following manners (sec. 2901.01(B)):

(1) Generally, in a manner so that the offense prohibits or is construed as prohibiting any pregnant woman or her physician from performing an abortion with the consent of the pregnant woman, with the consent of the pregnant woman implied by law in a medical emergency, or with the approval of one otherwise authorized by law to consent to medical treatment on behalf of the pregnant woman.² An abortion that violates the conditions described in the immediately preceding sentence may be punished under the various homicide, assault, and menacing offenses, as applicable. An abortion that does not violate the conditions described in the second immediately preceding sentence but that is one of specified abortion-related offenses may be punished as a commission of the applicable offense.

(2) In a manner so that the offense is applied or is construed as applying to a woman based on an act or omission of the woman that occurs while she is or was pregnant and that results in any of the following: (a) her delivery of a stillborn baby, (b) her causing, in any other manner, the death in utero of a viable, unborn human that she is carrying, (c) her causing the death of her child who is born alive but who dies from one or more injuries that are sustained while the child is a viable, unborn human, (d) her causing her child who is born alive to sustain one or more injuries while the child is a viable, unborn human, or (e) her causing,

¹ "Unborn human" means an individual organism of the species *homo sapiens* from fertilization until live birth. "Viable" means the stage of development of a human fetus at which there is a realistic possibility of maintaining and nourishing of a life outside the womb with or without temporary artificial life-sustaining support. (Sec. 2901.01(B)(1)(c).)

² Consent is sufficient under this provision if it is of the type otherwise adequate to permit medical treatment to the pregnant woman, even if it does not comply with the requirements in the offense of unlawful abortion (sec. 2901.01(B)(2)(a)).

threatening to cause, or attempting to cause, in any other manner, an injury, illness, or other physiological impairment, regardless of its duration or gravity, or a mental illness or condition, regardless of its duration or gravity, to a viable, unborn human that she is carrying.

Existing law contains comparable provisions regarding the unlawful termination of another's pregnancy (sec. 2903.09).³

Operation of the bill

The bill provides that an abortion that is partial birth infanticide may be punished as a violation of the applicable offense even if the abortion does not violate the conditions described in the first sentence of paragraph (1), above (secs. 2901.01(B)(2)(a) and 2903.09(C)(1)).

Sub. H.B. 135 of the 121st General Assembly and its prohibition against abortions using the dilation and extraction procedure

Overview and operation of the bill

Sub. H.B. 135 of the 121st General Assembly enacted prohibitions against performing an abortion using the "dilation and extraction procedure" and performing post-viability abortions. Sub. H.B. 135 also authorized specified persons to bring a civil action against a person who performed one of the prohibited abortions. The bill was declared unconstitutional in *Women's Medical Professional Corp. v. Voinovich* (S.D. Ohio 1995), 911 F. Supp. 1951 (*aff'd* (6th Cir. 1997), 130 F.3d 187, and *cert. denied* (1998), 118 S. Ct. 1357).

The bill repeals the prohibition against using the dilation and extraction procedure and the authorization to bring a civil suit against a person who violates that prohibition. (Section 2 of the bill and conforming amendments in secs. 2901.01(B)(2)(a) and 2903.09(C)(1).)

Performing an unlawful abortion procedure

Section 2919.15 prohibits a person from knowingly performing or attempting to perform a dilation and extraction procedure upon a pregnant woman. A person who violates this prohibition is guilty of performing an unlawful abortion

³ "Unlawful termination of another's pregnancy" means causing the death of an unborn member of the species *homo sapiens*, who is or was carried in the womb of another, as a result of injuries inflicted during the period that begins with fertilization and that continues unless and until live birth occurs (sec. 2903.09(A)).

procedure, a felony of the fourth degree. For the purpose of this prohibition, "dilation and extraction procedure" means the termination of a human pregnancy by purposely inserting a suction device into the skull of a fetus to remove the brain. "Dilation and extraction procedure" does not include either the suction curettage procedure of abortion or the suction aspiration procedure of abortion.

It is an affirmative defense to a charge of performing an unlawful abortion procedure that all other available abortion procedures would pose a greater risk to the health of the pregnant woman than the risk posed by the dilation and extraction procedure. If a person charged with performing an unlawful abortion procedure presents prima facie evidence relative to this affirmative defense, the prosecution, in addition to proving all elements of the violation by proof beyond a reasonable doubt, has the burden of proving by proof beyond a reasonable doubt that at least one other available abortion procedure would not pose a greater risk to the health of the pregnant woman than the risk posed by the dilation and extraction procedure performed or attempted to be performed by the person charged with the violation.⁴

A pregnant woman upon whom a dilation and extraction procedure is performed or attempted to be performed in violation of the prohibition is not guilty of an attempt to commit, complicity in the commission of, or conspiracy in the commission of performing an unlawful abortion procedure. (Sec. 2919.15.)

Civil action

Sub. H.B. 135 also provided that a woman upon whom a dilation and extraction procedure is attempted or performed in violation of the prohibition against that procedure has and may commence a civil action for compensatory damages, punitive or exemplary damages if authorized by the Punitive and Exemplary Damages Law, and court costs and reasonable attorney's fees against the person who attempted to perform or who performed the dilation and extraction procedure.

A person subject to such a civil action has an affirmative defense: that all other available abortion procedures would pose a greater risk to the health of the woman upon whom the dilation and extraction procedure was performed or attempted to be performed than the risk posed by the dilation and extraction procedure that was performed or attempted to be performed.

⁴ *Normally under criminal law, the burden of going forward with the evidence of an affirmative defense, and the burden of proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, for an affirmative defense, is upon the accused (sec. 2901.05--not in the bill).*

If a judgment is rendered in favor of the defendant in the civil action and the court finds, upon the filing of a motion under the Frivolous Conduct Law, that the commencement of the civil action constitutes frivolous conduct and that the defendant was adversely affected by the frivolous conduct, the court must award to the defendant reasonable attorney's fees. (Sec. 2307.51.)

Purpose clause

Sub. H.B. 135 also contained a purpose clause that stated that the General Assembly declared its intent in enacting the prohibition against performing the dilation and extraction procedure was to prevent the unnecessary use of a specific procedure used in performing an abortion. The intent is based on a state interest in preventing unnecessary cruelty to a human fetus. (Section 3 of Sub. H.B. 135 of the 121st General Assembly.)

Women's Medical Professional Corp. v. Voinovich

In *Women's Medical Professional Corp. v. Voinovich* (S.D. Ohio 1995), 911 F. Supp. 1951, the federal Southern District Court of Ohio declared Sub. H.B. 135 unconstitutional and temporarily enjoined the State of Ohio from enforcing any of its provisions. This temporary injunction subsequently was converted to a permanent injunction. The District Court's decision was affirmed by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Women's Medical Professional Corp. v. Voinovich* (6th Cir. 1997), 130 F.3d 187. The United States Supreme Court denied a petition for a writ of certiorari in *Voinovich v. Women's Medical Professional Corp.* (1998), 118 S. Ct. 1357.

District Court opinion. The District Court concluded that the definition of the dilation and extraction procedure could be construed to include the more widespread dilation and evacuation procedure. As a result, the definition was unconstitutionally vague, as it did not provide physicians with fair warning as to what conduct is permitted and as to what conduct will expose them to criminal and civil liability. (*Voinovich*, 911 F. Supp. at 1063-1067.)

Citing *Planned Parenthood of Missouri v. Danforth* (1976), 428 U.S. 52 (see **COMMENT 3**), the District Court concluded that a state may prohibit a specific method of abortion if there are safe and available alternatives. The Court also stated that, under *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), 112 S. Ct. 2791 (see **COMMENT 2**), that, if the ban places a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking a pre-viability abortion, the ban is an unconstitutional undue burden on the right to an abortion. The Court concluded that because the dilation and extraction procedure appears to be the safest method of terminating a pregnancy in the late second trimester and because the dilation and extraction

procedure is more available than induction methods, the District Court held that the plaintiff demonstrated a substantial likelihood of success of showing that the ban on the dilation and extraction procedure is unconstitutional. As a result, the temporary injunction was warranted. (*Voinovich*, 911 F. Supp. at 1067-1071.)

The District Court agreed, to a limited extent, with the State's declared interest in preventing unnecessary cruelty to a fetus. It noted that while *Casey* specifically delineated a few interests that justify state abortion regulation, that list was not exhaustive. The District Court stated that it would be contrary to all logic and common sense to hold that a state has no interest in preventing unnecessary cruelty to fetuses. Nonetheless, the District Court held that, regardless of how legitimate or compelling the state's interest is, the state may not place an undue burden on a woman's right to seek a pre-viability abortion. The District Court also appeared unconvinced that the dilation and extraction procedure was more cruel than other methods of abortion. As a result, the Court was not convinced that the ban on the dilation and extraction abortion procedure served the stated purpose of preventing cruelty to fetuses. (*Voinovich*, 911 F. Supp. at 1072-1075.)

Court of appeals opinion. A majority of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the District Court's decision. The Court of Appeals concluded that Sub. H.B. 135's definition of the dilation and extraction procedure was broad enough to include both the dilation and extraction procedure and the dilation and evacuation procedure. Applying *Casey's* "undue burden" test and relying on the United States Supreme Court's analysis in *Danforth*, the Court of Appeals found that, with respect to pre-viability abortions, Sub. H.B. 135 placed an unconstitutional undue burden on the right to an abortion. With respect to post-viability abortions, the Court of Appeals declined to make any holding regarding the dilation and extraction procedure under the "undue burden" test. Rather, it found that the ban as it applied to post-viability abortions could not be severed so as to preserve their potential constitutional application. The Court of Appeals commented that it would have to rewrite the act to create a provision that could stand by itself. Because it could not do this, it struck down the ban on dilation and extraction abortions as it applied to post-viability abortions as well. (*Voinovich*, 130 F.3d at 201-202.)

COMMENT

1. This bill, like any that prohibits abortion procedures, raises a number of constitutional questions. A court could find that the prohibition against partial birth infanticide would apply to pre-viability abortions. If it does, it is uncertain whether it would find the prohibition to place an unconstitutional undue burden on the right to an abortion. Similarly, the medical emergency exception proposed by

the bill does not appear to (1) take into account the psychological and emotional health of the mother, (2) contain a scienter requirement, or (3) permit the physician to rely on his own best clinical judgment. The medical emergency exception to Sub. H.B. 135's prohibition against post-viability abortions was found inadequate for these reasons (*Voinovich*, 130 F.3d at 203-209).

2. The current standard for analyzing abortion regulations is unclear. In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), 112 S. Ct. 2791, Justices O'Connor, Kennedy, and Souter stated that the central holding of *Roe v. Wade*, that women have the right to an abortion, should be affirmed on the basis of *stare decisis*, but that the trimester standard adopted by *Roe v. Wade* should be replaced with an undue burden standard. An undue burden exists and a provision of law is invalid if the provision's purpose or effect is to place a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability. Subsequent to viability, the plurality of the Court affirmed the holding in *Roe v. Wade*: the State in promoting its interest in the potentiality of human life may, if it chooses, regulate and even proscribe, abortion except where it is necessary, in appropriate medical judgment, for the preservation of the life or the health of the mother. (*Casey*, at 2821.) Justice Stevens appears to have preferred a complete affirmation of *Roe v. Wade* and the cases following *Roe v. Wade* (*Casey*, at 2839-2841). Justice Blackmun also concluded that *Roe v. Wade* should be affirmed and that abortion regulations should be subjected to strict judicial scrutiny: a regulation is constitutional only if the governmental entity imposing the restriction can demonstrate that the limitation is both necessary and narrowly tailored to serve a compelling governmental interest (*Casey*, at 2846-2847). Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justices White, Scalia, and Thomas concluded that *Roe v. Wade* was wrongly decided and should be overruled and that the Constitution does not require states to permit abortion on demand, although the states may permit abortion on demand if they choose to do so (*Casey*, at 2855 and 2873). A woman's interest in having an abortion is a form of liberty protected by the Due Process Clause, but States may regulate abortion procedures in ways rationally related to a legitimate state interest (*Casey*, at 2867).

3. In *Planned Parenthood v. Danforth* (1976), 428 U.S. 52, the Supreme Court struck down a Missouri law that prohibited after the first 12 weeks of pregnancy the use of the abortion procedure of saline amniocentesis. The Court found that the law would prohibit the most commonly used abortion procedure, that saline amniocentesis abortions are safer with respect to maternal mortality than carrying the pregnancy to term, that the prohibition would force the use of abortion methods less safe to the health of the pregnant woman than saline amniocentesis, and that another safe technique of abortion was not available. Consequently, the law failed as a reasonable protection of maternal health, and the

court held it to be an unconstitutional arbitrary regulation designed to prevent the vast majority of abortions after the first 12 weeks. (*Danforth*, at 75-79.)

HISTORY

ACTION	DATE	JOURNAL ENTRY
Introduced	05-20-99	pp. 699-700

H0351-I.123/rss