

Senators Revisit Partial-Birth Abortion

News in the past few days has not-surprisingly been focused on the brewing storms in the middle-east and North Korea. One thread of national news that has faded from the focus of the American people has been Senate politics and the general operations of the government. I believe that one recent topic politics will shock Americans back into focusing on politics. Recently, there have been strong motions in the senate towards anti-abortion legislation. The extreme fervor with which this issue has been debated in the past several years is not easily forgotten and will probably bubble up to the surface of American interest in the next few days.

With a Republican-dominated senate there has been increasing momentum in the past several months towards passing more conservative legislation in many areas of health care. In recent days, senate support has been building behind a bill that would ban partial-birth abortions. Today, leading anti-abortion senate members and anti-abortion groups gathered together to hold a news conference on to answer questions and state their respective positions on the matter. Many of the questions that this meeting will address will be concerning the scope of the proposed bill. Much of the debate surrounding anti-abortion legislation in the case of partial-birth abortions is related to the methodology that the legislators will employ to determine which abortions are banned and which are allowed under Roe V. Wade legislation.

Many of the strongest supporters of abortion rights in America have expressed support for a bill banning partial-birth abortions. Democrat Senate Minority leader Tom Daschle and many other senators wish to have specific guidelines for when the abortions are allowed as well as statistical data indicating the proposed number of abortions per year that will be made illegal with the passing of this bill. The technical difficulty of answering the question of guidelines is considerable. Many experts indicate that much of the motivation for the ban is that most fetuses during the second and third trimesters are well-developed enough to survive if delivered. This seems to favor towards a developmental timetable to determine the legality of an abortion. The practicality of enforcing such a guideline is severely reduced from the simplistic approach of guidelines based on trimester and due date. Momentum is currently going in favor of the more simple guidelines based on due dates.

The end result of the proposed bill banning partial-birth abortions will not end up being a reduction in the total number of abortions in the country. Many theories contend that illegal and unsafe abortions will correspondingly go up as the legal abortions go down. This legislation will be the first major anti-abortion legislation passed in several decades and will test this theory and many others. In the end, the complex social role that abortion plays in America is sufficiently difficult to encapsulate that one can not be guaranteed of anything except that the future of the abortion system in America is uncertain and will certainly be a news thread to keep an eye on.