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SERIOUS BLOWS

Deception Wins Over Truth On Election Day 2006

by Patricia Pitkus Bainbridge, M.A.

The November elections have come and gone. No more irritating ads. No more yard signs. No more unwanted political flyers. It's finally over—at least for another two years. The ramifications, however, are just beginning.

The dominant media culture and average citizens are still analyzing the results of the mid-term elections. There is no shortage of opinions. One thing is certain: with the opening of the 110th Congress in January 2007, there will be a shift of power that will not bode well for the unborn, those with severe disabilities, and those with traditional values. The sad reality is the dignity of every human being—especially of the most vulnerable—was dealt a serious blow by the 2006 mid-term elections.

In a November 12th interview with the Zenit news agency, journalist Russell Shaw (who has served as a member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications for ten years and was recently elected to another five year term) summed it up: “[The impact of the November elections] means no new pro-life legislation at the federal level in the next two years. In fact, pro-lifers will have their hands full protecting gains already made. Even more serious, in the new Senate the pro-choice side will be able to defeat any new Supreme Court nominees resembling Roberts and Alito that the president might send up.”

Failed Referenda

In addition to the change in the national political landscape, there were four failed state referenda that have abortion apologists and moral relativists cheering. California and Oregon rejected (54 to 46 percent in both states) attempts to ensure that parents of underage girls seeking abortion would be notified.

Most people agree that parents should be involved in major decisions made by their minor children. In California, all non-emergency medical procedures on boys and girls under the age of 18 must have parental *consent*. It is not unreasonable to expect that parents should at least be informed when their minor daughters are seeking an abortion—a procedure that can have serious physical and emotional consequences.

According to the National Abortion Federation, 44 states have passed laws requiring either parental notification or consent, in some cases even by both parents. The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld these parental involvement laws as long as there is a provision for judicial bypass.

With misleading and dishonest advertising from Planned Parenthood, the League of Women Voters, various medical associations, the Oregon Education Association, and California Teachers Association, it's not surprising that California and Oregon rejected the ballot measures. What *is* surprising is that Oregon's parental notification measure received the same 46 percent citizen *support* as did California's proposition. I say “surprising” because Oregon has virtually no restrictions on abortion and has gone much further in removing legal parental involvement with children—Oregon does not require parental consent for medical procedures if the minor is 15 or older.

Pro-life citizens will not give up—even in such liberal states as California and Oregon. They vow to be back in 2008.

Ban Goes Down to Defeat

Socially conservative South Dakota already has parental notification and a 24-hour waiting period. In March 2006, the legislature passed House Bill (HB) 1215—a bill that banned most abortions. While not a perfect law, it was anticipated that pro-abortion forces would file suit which would then send it to the Supreme Court where it would force a re-examination of *Roe v. Wade*.

Before that could happen, Planned Parenthood and its ilk descended on South Dakota and garnered enough signatures to place a statewide initiative on the 2006 ballot in the hope of repealing the new prohibition on abortion. To cover all their bases, they also filed suit to prohibit the law from taking effect. Right on cue, one day before the law was to take effect, it was enjoined by a Federal judge. Now the citizens of South Dakota would vote on whether to uphold the abortion ban or repeal it.

As in California and Oregon, Planned Parenthood and other pro-abortion groups led the fight against the ban. The *Los*

Angeles Times reported that “abortion rights supporters...relied on money and volunteers from across the nation to defeat the ban.” What they didn’t report was how they also relied on medical disinformation and false claims to sway voters to vote “no.”

Unfortunately, the referendum was rejected by 55-45 percent. That’s the bad news. The good news is that the vast majority of legislators who voted for HB 1215 were re-elected and the pro-life people will not give up. Like their California and Oregon counterparts, South Dakota pro-lifers will be back in 2008.

A Heartbreaking Loss

“Passage of the stem cell constitutional amendment in Missouri, albeit by a slim margin, came as a welcome victory of science over ideology.” That is the opinion—though a poorly informed one—of the editorial board of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* three days after the citizens of Missouri voted by a margin of only 2 percent to pass Amendment 2—the Missouri Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative.

Jaci Winship, executive director of Missourians Against Human Cloning, had a different view as she writes, “Truth was defeated and deception won a victory.”

These two opposing comments reflect the basic struggle that took place in Missouri between those who argued for a “Yes” vote on Amendment 2 and those who advocated for a “No” vote. Fueled by the mainstream media, confusion and deception reigned.

In making an informed decision, a person needs to know the facts. But in the debate on embryonic stem cell research and cloning (as well as many other issues), the average person relies—unfortunately—on the mainstream media and his or her circle of family, friends or colleagues for the “facts.” That often results in disinformation and serious error.

One of the major deceptions in the Missouri debate centered on what the Amendment would or would not permit. Proponents insisted the amendment would *not* permit cloning. Opponents insisted it would. Who was telling the truth?

The “Fair Ballot Language” from the Missouri Secretary of State’s website states, “This amendment will allow Missouri patients and researchers access to any method of stem cell research, therapies and cures permitted under federal law.” It definitely states that a “Yes” vote would “ban human cloning or attempted cloning.” But is a definite statement necessarily a true statement?

The question (not answered by the Fair Ballot Language) that must be answered is “what is meant by ‘stem cell research’ and ‘human cloning?’”

In the “Full Text” section of the Secretary of State’s website, the amendment’s definition of “stem cell” is found:

“Stem cell” means a cell that can divide multiple times and give rise to specialized cells in the body, and includes but is not limited to the stem cells generally referred to as (i) adult stem cells that are found in some body tissues (including but not limited to adult stem cells derived from adult body tissues and from discarded umbilical cords and placentas), and (ii) embryonic stem cells (including but not limited to stem cells derived from in vitro fertilization blastocysts and from cell reprogramming techniques such as somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Human embryonic stem cell research,” also referred to as “early stem cell research,” means any scientific or medical research involving human stem cells derived from in vitro fertilization blastocysts or from somatic cell nuclear transfer.

The last four words in both definitions hold the key to understanding the truth. “Somatic cell nuclear transfer” is the scientific (not ideological) term for *cloning*. The amendment clearly says it bans human cloning, so how can it ban cloning in one section of the amendment and permit it in another? Checking the definition section again, you will find:

“Clone or attempt to clone a human being” means to implant in a uterus or attempt to implant in a uterus anything other than the product of fertilization of an egg of a human female by a sperm of a human male for the purpose of initiating a pregnancy that could result in the creation of a human fetus, or the birth of a human being.

There you have it. While a “Yes” vote on Amendment 2 was a vote against *reproductive* cloning (implanting a cloned human being in a uterus and carrying him or her to term), it was also a vote for *therapeutic* cloning (creating human embryos for the purpose of harvesting their stem cells).

When all the other examples of deception surrounding Amendment 2 are objectively examined, there can be little doubt that Jaci Winship is right—deception won over truth.

What Now?

Archbishop Raymond Burke summed up the loss in Missouri:

The election campaign for the passage of Amendment 2 has shown us all how deeply rooted the culture of death is in our society. The experience of the campaign is a clarion call to all Catholics and other men and women of good will to rededicate ourselves to prayer and work, in order that we restore, in our state and nation, the respect for the integrity of human procreation and for the inviola-

ble dignity of every human life, from the first moment of its existence.

The Catholic Church will continue to teach the moral law written upon every human heart, which teaches us that nothing can ever justify the artificial generation of human life and that nothing can ever justify the killing of innocent and defenseless human life.

With regard to stem-cell research, the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis stands by its unparalleled tradition of compassionate health care and pledges continued support of ethical stem-cell research.

The same sentiments could be applied to losses in California, Oregon, and South Dakota. The defeats we experienced in this mid-term election are only a setback. We may be down, but we are not out! We will not give up until all innocent human life—from fertilization to natural death—is respected and protected.

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