

## **NRLC Affiliate Passed New Hampshire's Law Heard by United States Supreme Court**

BY Roger Stenson, Executive Director, Citizens for Life

Moving mountains--it was hardly less than that--to pass New Hampshire's parental notice law was just this side of miraculous. You've heard the expression, "I wish I could have been a fly on the wall." I was when the law was enacted against incredible odds in 2003. And it was great.

Just as it was great to hear the law defended before the United States Supreme Court the last day of November 2005.

First, full disclosure. I work for Citizens for Life, the National Right to Life affiliate in New Hampshire. We were the lobby that got the law passed when no one thought it could be done. Needless to say, pro-abortionists immediately challenged the law in court.

We were treated very kindly by State Attorney General Kelly Ayotte. She kept us close by during her heroic struggle to defend the law all the way up to the highest court in the land.

In my role as a conduit for information from the experts to the decision-makers. I was privileged to see the brilliance and fortitude of the scholars and leaders who made the whole thing happen.

By virtue of getting NRL News, you probably know about National Right to Life. You may even be a member of its affiliate in your state. You know about the 3,000 chapters and how hard we all work and how demanding we are of each other.

This is the backbone of the Movement which makes effective public policy possible, passes legislation, elects candidates, and informs the public. Without this New Hampshire's parental notice law would never have been enacted.

Attorney Mary Balch is NRLC's director of state legislation. It is her responsibility to monitor legislation in the states, all year, every year, related to abortion. It is a mammoth undertaking.

To monitor is to track and watch, which Mary Balch does with the greatest care. She also writes much of the pro-life bills that are introduced and writes amendments for those that need some fixing.

She helps work out strategies with state affiliates to pass good laws and stop bad ones. Mary does more than I can begin to explain, and part of it is a genuine gift for holding the hands of nervous legislators.

Teresa Collett is a law professor at Saint Thomas Law School in Minnesota. She is the scholar's scholar, elegantly intellectual. She is also a lawyer's lawyer whose professionalism is so cordial she makes everyone in the room happy to be there.

She came to New Hampshire and gave expert testimony in favor of our parental notice bill. She worked personally with members of the legislature, providing them with constitutionally sound responses to arguments voiced against the bill.

Once the law was enjoined, the fight was on. To take this law up to the First Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston and then on to the Supreme Court was a decision entirely up to Kelly Ayotte, our attorney

general. She did it. And she brought Teresa Collett on board, because of her constitutional scholarship, to assist in oral arguments at the Appeals Court.

National Right to Life's counsel, James Bopp, organized the meeting, which Attorney General Ayotte attended by teleconference, which brought together all those who were filing amicus curiae (friend of the court) briefs with the Supreme Court in favor of parental notice.

This important meeting was organized by Tom Marzen, who works in the office of NRLC General Counsel James Bopp, and was held at the National Right to Life office in Washington, DC.

Made possible by a grant by the Alliance Defense Fund, the meeting ensured that all bases to defend a parental notice were covered in the amicus briefs.

It should be emphatically noted that many of the attorneys who wrote briefs provided an indispensable service. I actually got to proofread some of these briefs. They were brilliant.

Citizens for Life was central to passing the law and coordinating its legal defense. It is always hard work and most of the coaching and technical credit properly goes to Mary Balch and Teresa Collett.

Once again, pro-lifers triumphed over seemingly impossible odds. We now wait for word from the United States Supreme Court.