

Pro-Life News in Brief

By Liz Townsend

Alabama Medical Clinic Closed by State

Citing "multiple and serious violations of the rules," the Alabama State Board of Health closed Summit Medical Center, an abortion clinic, in Birmingham May 17, according to the *Birmingham News*.

The state took action when a woman delivered a stillborn six-pound, four-ounce baby six days after the clinic, claiming the baby was only six weeks old, began the RU486 abortion process. The unidentified woman sought an abortion February 20, and was given an ultrasound by a non-physician. The staff member told her she was six weeks pregnant, the *News* reported.

Again without a physician present, clinic staff gave the woman a dose of RU486, even though her blood pressure tested at a dangerously high level of 182/129, according to the *News*. They also gave her four vaginal suppository tablets of the prostaglandin misoprostol and told her to take them at home two days later to complete the chemical abortion.

The woman checked in to a Birmingham Hospital on February 26, four days after taking the prostaglandin "with the head of a baby protruding," according to the state board's suspension order. She delivered a "stillborn, macerated, six pound, four ounce baby."

"She was almost certainly in the third trimester and near term," state health officer Don Williamson told the *News*.

Investigators found that the abortion clinic failed to follow regulations on the presence of physicians during abortions, determining the correct age of the unborn baby, and recordkeeping. "Four of 10 sampled patients did not have a physician present," said Williamson. "There were multiple violations of rules over multiple days. The complete statement of deficiencies does highlight the gravity of the situation."

The emergency suspension lasts for 90 to 120 days, and the state board is scheduled to consider further action in a June 20 hearing. "Any action is possible as a result of the hearing," Williamson told the *News*. "The license could be reinstated. They could be facing a permanent revocation of the license."

British Parliament Rejects Assisted Dying Bill

The British House of Lords voted 148-100 May 12 to postpone debate on Lord Joffe's Assisted Dying Bill for six months, preventing its consideration during the current Parliamentary session.

Opponents of the bill gathered 100,000 signatures on a petition against legalizing euthanasia, and many others, including doctors and religious leaders, have pledged to keep fighting such proposals, *The Telegraph* reported.

Pro-life, disability rights, and human rights groups joined together in the Care NOT Killing (CNK) alliance to oppose the bill. "This has been a great day for those campaigning to halt any move towards the legalisation of euthanasia in the United Kingdom," said CNK campaign director Peter Saunders in a press release.

"Our central point has been that the so-called right to die could so easily become a duty to die for old, sick, depressed and vulnerable patients. That point has been transmitted to a wider audience today, so enabling more people to appreciate the dangers inherent in Lord Joffe's Bill."

The bill was based on Oregon's assisted suicide law. It would have allowed doctors to prescribe a lethal dose of medication to terminally ill patients who ask to die, according to *The Independent*.

Lord Joffe presented the bill as merely giving "an additional end-of-life option" for the terminally ill, *The Independent* reported.

During seven hours of debate May 12 before the vote, however, opponents of the bill warned about the abuses and devaluing of human life that would result. "If introduced, assisted suicide might be treated as casually as abortion is today, after a few years," said Lord Carey of Clifton, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, according to *The Telegraph*.

The current Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, said the bill would send the message that "certain kinds of life are not worth living," according to *The Telegraph*.

If the bill became law, said Williams, "we would also jeopardise the security of the vulnerable by radically changing the relationship between patient and physician."

Lord Joffe said that he would reintroduce the bill in the next session, *The Telegraph* reported.

Nebraska Abortions Decrease by 11.5 Percent

Continuing a nationwide trend, the number of abortions in Nebraska declined by 11.5% between 2004 and 2005, to a total of 3,173 abortions.

The number is the second lowest since the state began tracking abortions in 1974, according to the Nebraska Health and Human Services System.

In the year after the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, there were 3,094 abortions in Nebraska. Abortions continued to rise until 1990, when 6,346 unborn babies lost their lives. After that, the numbers have steadily declined.

The state gathered other information in addition to abortion numbers. When asked the reason for resorting to abortion, 2,853 women cited socioeconomic concerns, which is 89.9% of the total. Only 3 women claimed that the pregnancy threatened their life, while 67 cited maternal health reasons. The average age of aborting women was 25.6 in 2005.

According to pro-life groups, changing attitudes among young people have contributed to the decline. "Generation Y, the Millennials up to 24 or 25 years old, are much more inclined to see abortion as violence and as a failure," Greg Schleppenbach, director of pro-life activities for the Nebraska Catholic Conference, told the *Omaha World-Herald*. "They are more inclined to abstinence and spirituality."

Canadian Unborn Victims of Violence Bill Introduced

A bill proposed by a Canadian Member of Parliament (MP) would allow prosecutors to charge criminals with two separate crimes when a woman and her unborn child are attacked or killed.

"This bill would introduce a measure of humanity and legal protection for the unborn sorely needed in this country," Paul Ranalli, M.D., a neurologist at the University of Toronto, told *NRL News*. "Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms speaks about protecting the 'security of person'; this bill would address not only the humanity of the unborn child, but also the security of the woman in her role as a mother, with a right to secure safety and justice for her family."

The tragic story of 19-year-old Olivia Talbot of Edmonton, Alberta, spurred Conservative MP Leon Benoit to propose the bill, according to the *Toronto Star*. Talbot and her 27-week-old unborn son died last fall after Talbot was shot once in the head and three times in the stomach. Her assailant, a former childhood friend, has been charged with only one count of murder, the *Star* reported.

Talbot's mother, Mary Talbot, has campaigned steadily since then for a change in the law to recognize the death of babies like her grandson. "I felt that there was something wrong with the law, that the fellow who had murdered my daughter and grandson wasn't being charged with two murders," Talbot told the *Star*. Her grandson "was just barely nicked by a bullet, which was horrible, but he was perfect. He had long black hair and 10 fingers and 10 toes, and everything about him was perfect."

The bill would have no impact on abortion law, since it would only apply when someone kills an unborn child without the mothers' consent. Benoit told the *Star* that the bill is "all about protecting, especially, pregnant women against violence, and where they've made the choice to keep their child, of protecting that unborn child."

Oklahoma Passes Omnibus Pro-Life Bill

A comprehensive pro-life bill, comprised of five separate bills earlier passed by the House but killed by a Senate committee chairman, finally passed the Senate May 18 and was signed by Gov. Brad Henry five days later.

"The enactment of SB 1742 represents a major step forward for unborn babies and pregnant women in Oklahoma," Tony Lauinger, state chairman of Oklahomans for Life, told **NRL News**. "The bill provides help and hope to children in the womb and to their mothers, as well."

The new law requires one parent to consent to a minor's abortion, allows a woman to view her unborn child on ultrasound before an abortion, requires a woman to be informed that her unborn child older than 20 weeks' gestation may feel pain, applies the state's unborn victims of violence law uniformly across all homicide statutes, and provides funding to pregnancy help centers.

The provisions had previously been stalled each time they reached a Senate committee chaired by pro-abortion Sen. Bernest Cain (D-Oklaoma City), according to *Tulsa World*. This time, bill supporters were able to bypass Cain's committee, and the measure went on to the full Senate to pass by a lopsided vote of 38-8.

Lauinger said that the bill will benefit many Oklahomans. "The funding provided to pro-life crisis pregnancy centers through the bill's Alternatives-to-Abortion program could greatly reduce the number of abortions by providing pro-life counseling and support services to more expectant mothers," he said. "Requiring the consent of a parent before a minor may get an abortion will protect teenage girls from exploitation, strengthen families, and save the lives of unborn children."

Pro-lifers had many people to thank for their persistence during the long process to pass the bill. "We are grateful to the House and Senate Republicans, whose unrelenting commitment to the cause of life pushed this comprehensive pro-life legislation through to final passage," said Lauinger. "We especially appreciate, as always, the absolutely indispensable help of Mary Spaulding Balch of National Right to Life, without whose efforts and dedication this victory for the unborn child would not have been possible."

Connecticut Suspends Choose Life License Plate

Responding to a complaint by the attorney general and a pro-abortion legislator, the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has suspended sales of the "Choose Life" license plate. The DMV will investigate charges that the pro-adoption charity that receives funds from the plates does not have a large enough presence in the state.

About 200 plates have been sold in Connecticut since 2003, according to the *Hartford Courant*. The specialty plates, which feature the familiar drawing of children with the words "Choose Life," cost \$65 to obtain and then \$25 each subsequent year. The money raised goes to The Children First Foundation, a nonprofit organization based in New York but which funds pro-adoption and safe haven groups in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and Rep. Roberta Willis (D-Salisbury) sent the DMV a letter May 24 accusing Children First of having "negligible, if any, 'operations' in Connecticut, much less a base of operations in this state," the *Courant* reported.

However, Children First president Elizabeth Rex insists that her group has distributed \$2,000 each year to Connecticut groups, and that although the group is based out of a member's home in the state, it does legitimate work there.

"I'll be happy to answer any questions and concerns that anyone has," Rex told the *Courant*. "This is the third time we've cooperated with the DMV. We dealt with their legal department and gave them all our papers, and they approved our plates."

Rex said that her group's legitimacy can be seen in letters from many Connecticut officials praising Children First's work in the state—including Attorney General Blumenthal. "Please extend my deepest appreciation and admiration to your members for the outstanding work that they do in advocating that every abandoned child should have a home with adoptive parents who love that child unconditionally," Blumenthal wrote Rex March 4, 2003, according to the *Courant*.

Children First has also led a campaign to bring the license plates to New York and New Jersey, but so far the group's attempts in those states have been unsuccessful.

Pro-Death Statistics Announced in Britain

To the sorrow of pro-lifers, statistics released in May show that the culture of death is on the rise in Great Britain. The number of RU486 abortions performed at Britain's largest abortion chain doubled in just one year, while more than 20

unborn babies have been killed since 1996 because they were diagnosed with club foot, a common and easily corrected condition.

BPAS, formerly known as the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, announced May 29 that RU486 was used in 10,000 abortions at its clinics in 2005, up from 5,000 just one year earlier, according to the *London Times*.

BPAS used the RU486 abortion technique in almost one-third of the 32,000 abortions it did last year, the *Daily Record* reported. A woman takes mifepristone, or RU486, at one clinic visit to kill her unborn baby, then comes back to the clinic two days later for a dose of prostaglandin to cause contractions. The woman returns home to wait for her body to expel the dead baby.

If BPAS's percentage of RU486 abortions is applied throughout the United Kingdom, it is estimated that up to 50,000 babies were killed by chemical abortion in 2005, according to the *Daily Mail*.

According to BPAS, the babies killed by RU486 were all younger than nine weeks old. British law also allows abortion for older babies, up to birth if they have a "serious handicap." Unfortunately, the definition of "serious handicap" has grown to include relatively minor conditions such as club foot.

Babies with club foot have feet that point down and in, which in the worst cases causes foot deformity and a limp, according to the *Sunday Times*. Doctors, however, can easily correct the problem with splints or boots, often not even needing to operate.

Numbers released by the Office of National Statistics May 28 showed that 20 of these unborn babies, all older than 20 weeks, were killed between 1996 and 2004. Other unborn babies died because they had webbed fingers or extra digits, the *Daily Mail* reported.

Parents of babies born with club feet said they were shocked and saddened by the numbers. Many said that they were advised to abort their babies, but refused.

"It was strongly suggested that we consider abortion after they found our baby had a club foot," David Wildgrove, whose son Alexander was born in 1996, told the *Times*. "I was appalled. We resisted, the problem was treated and he now runs around and plays football with everyone else."

Joanna Jepson, who has been outspoken in speaking out against abortions for cleft palate, condemned the practice of aborting these babies. "Actions like these are fostering a disposable attitude to human life and I'm extremely concerned it is going on," she told the *Daily Mail*. "I am appalled that the medical profession is allowing or even suggesting abortions for these conditions."