



Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act upheld by Supreme Court

The Supreme Court upheld the [Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act](#) causing a stir among groups on both sides of the abortion issue. This [April 18, 2007 decision](#) by the Supreme Court does little to reduce the numbers of abortions, nor does it address the moral and spiritual poverty of the decision to abort a child. It does ban one particularly gruesome procedure often used on viable babies and known as the Dilatation (Dilation) and Extraction (D&X), or Intact Dilatation & Evacuation (IDE), method or more commonly known as the [Partial Birth Abortion](#) method. Numbers of babies aborted by the PBA procedure are unreliable, but estimates fall between 2000 and 3000 per year on babies in the 2nd and 3rd trimester---about ¼% of the babies aborted yearly. So, the PBA ban may result in saving a small number of those babies aborted annually, unless doctors simply choose to use another equally gruesome procedure. It is entirely possible that more will choose the equally horrific procedure of [Dilation and Evacuation \(D&E\)](#) in which the unborn child is dismembered in the womb by forceps and extracted.

There is no support in the [PC\(USA\)'s abortion policy](#) for a procedure which partially delivers a child and then kills the child before completing the delivery. For example the 1992 policy document *Problem Pregnancies and Abortion* says, "The Strong Christian

presumption is that since all life is precious to God, we are to preserve and protect it.” It also says, “Under circumstances in which abortion is the decision, it is preferable for it to happen earlier rather than later,” and “...after human life has begun, it is to be cherished and protected as a precious gift of God.” (Section E, page 11).

In 2006 the General Assembly approved a statement affirming “that the lives of viable unborn babies—those well-developed enough to survive outside the womb if delivered—ought to be preserved and cared for and not aborted.” Many partial birth abortions involve babies that could be born alive and could survive outside the womb. So Presbyterian Church members might have anticipated that the PC(USA) would welcome the decision of the Supreme Court to uphold a ban on the terrible procedure of partial birth abortion. Not so!

The [Institute on Religion and Democracy](#) released a [Press Release](#) on April 24 quoting Jim Berkley of Presbyterian Action:

“The Supreme Court decision ought to be applauded by all Presbyterian entities, including the Washington Office, because it supports Presbyterian belief in the sanctity of life.”

Berkley was responding to a [Witness in Washington Weekly](#) (p. 5) report by the Presbyterian Washington Office. The decision on PBA was cast by the Washington Office report as being negative and confusing and a threat to Roe v. Wade and a woman’s right to abort her baby. Their response gives away their bias toward seeing abortion as a “reproductive right” of the woman that must be protected even at the cost of the lives of innocent unborn babies who might well be born alive if not aborted by the PBA method. It is a view that makes a legal

“right” of more value than the teaching of Scripture that human life is created in the image of God, planned, protected and cherished by Him.

Our role as the Church is to protect and care for the innocent and vulnerable, and to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of families facing difficult conditions of pregnancy. Opposing partial birth abortions is not a stand that contradicts or undermines the denomination’s policy on abortion. The taking of the life of a child in the process of being born goes well beyond the policy of our church. No mother’s life is saved by partial birth abortion. The process takes 2-4 days. In a true medical emergency a Ceasarean birth is much safer for a mother with critical health issues. Certainly no baby’s life is saved by this procedure.

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