

150-5

Unborn victims

When one murder becomes two

By Thomas L. Jipping

On Wednesday, the U.S. House of Representatives will take up an innovative bill, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, which closes a glaring loophole in federal criminal law.

Introduced on Feb. 7, 2001, by Rep. Lindsey Graham, H.R.503 has nearly 100 co-sponsors. It would amend the federal criminal code and Uniform Code of Military Justice to criminalize injuring or killing a preborn child while committing certain federal crimes. These include drive-by shootings, assaulting federal officers, damaging religious property, murder or manslaughter, kidnapping, hostage-taking, and racketeering. The bill states that "the punishment for that separate offense is the same as the punishment... for that conduct, had that injury or death occurred to the unborn child's mother."

The existence of this bill suggests that someone out there actually questions whether criminal penalties should follow crimes and crime victims. A criminal murdering a mother and the infant daughter in her arms commits two crimes. It is factually false and morally twisted to say he commits only one crime had he murdered the same two women a few months earlier, the child in her mother's womb rather than in her arms. Two crimes should receive two punishments.

Abortion advocates should strongly support this bill, at least if their rhetoric about "choice" is genuine. The same Supreme Court that created the abortion right in 1973 held in 1977 that choosing not to have an abortion is "at least as fundamental" as choosing to have one. Violent criminals who injure or kill a preborn child interfere with a woman's choice. Supporting a woman who makes that choice means supporting penalties against those who criminally interfere with it.

Abortion advocates, of course, oppose this bill. Their claim, however, that it is a way to prosecute abortionists van-

ishes upon simply reading the bill. It only applies to those who engage in "conduct that violates any of the provisions of law" listed in the bill. The list does not include performing abortions. If that were not obvious enough, though, the bill also states: "Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit the prosecution of any person for conduct relating to an abortion."

Abortion advocates attack this bill for a more subtle, but more important, reason. They know that the only way killing a child can be a woman's right

To perpetuate the fraud, abortion advocates will introduce, yes, killer amendments to the bill. One of them, pushed by Rep. Zoe Lofgren, would substitute for the Unborn Victims of Violence Act a radically different bill, based on the biologically and morally false notion that a preborn child is part of her mother in the way an intestine or a polyp might be. A criminal injuring or killing a preborn child would only be guilty of interfering with the mother's pregnancy, thus ignoring the child altogether. This fraudulent gimmick tries to avoid what half the states have recognized: that children can be crime victims before, as well as after, they are born.

On July 25, 2000, the House voted 417-0 for the Innocent Child Protection Act to deny federal funds for executing a pregnant woman. The bill defined a "child in utero" as "a member of the species Homo sapiens, at any stage of development, who is carried in the womb." Yes, even Rep. Lofgren voted for it. The Unborn Victims of Violence Act includes the very same definition. Could there be anything more perverse than to say a child must be protected when her criminal mother is to be executed, but need not be protected when her innocent mother is attacked by a criminal?

The Unborn Victims of Violence Act tells the truth. A pregnant woman presents not one, but two, living human beings who can be crime victims. Treating those victims properly may well create moral dissonance

between an abortionist killing a baby being a constitutional right and an uninvited attacker killing that same baby being a crime. So be it. Perpetuating the fraud, suppressing both truth and morality, and letting criminals get away with murder, does not solve that problem.



Violent criminals who injure or kill a preborn child interfere with a woman's choice. Supporting a woman making that choice means supporting penalties against those criminally interfering with it. Abortion advocates oppose this.

is to pretend that the child is not there or that thing in a mother's womb is not actually a child. When a pregnant woman wants an abortion, she and not the child becomes the center of attention. When a pregnant woman does not want an abortion, however, it's the child everyone talks about. Abortion advocates know that, by keeping the baby in the picture, the Unborn Victims of Violence Act undermines the no-baby fraud behind their agenda.

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