

Senators urge protection of unborn

By Dick Piersol

While members of the Nebraska Coalition for Life demonstrated across the street from the statehouse, the Nebraska Legislature Wednesday debated and approved 37-5 a resolution urging the U.S. Congress to conduct hearings on a possible constitutional amendment protecting the rights of the unborn.

The vote came three years to the day after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled voluntary abortions legal.

Aurora Sen. Maurice Kremer, sponsor of the resolution, LR113, described the "pitiful lack of protection" granted the unborn under current statutes. After moving passage of the resolution, he quickly was supported by Sens. Ron Cope of Kearney, James Dickenson of Millard, Warren Swigart of Omaha and Harold Moylan of Omaha.

Omaha Sen. Ernest Chambers, who opposed the resolution, said the senators should not be afraid to say what they really think. When the abortion issue arose in the past, he said, some senators told him privately that they agreed with him in favoring abortion, but could not do so publicly because of their constituency.

He accused those supporting the resolution of having one standard for the rights of the unborn, and another for others, specifically, unwanted children.

"No one condones murder," Chambers said, "But we're talking about children in an intolerable world created by adults. Are you concerned about that child only when it's in the womb?"

Roses given to senators

Referring to roses placed at each senator's desk by the Nebraska Coalition for Life, he added, "It might have been a better idea to leave these beautiful flowers in their natural state."

Lincoln Sen. Shirley Marsh also opposed the resolution. She said she did not advocate abortions, but said "you do not stop them by outlawing them." She said to outlaw abortion would send poor women back to unsafe underground clinics.

Lincoln Sen. John DeCamp supported the resolution. "If abortion in fact takes a human life, then it is wrong from the start, and two wrongs don't make a right," he said.

Sen. Ralph Kelly of Grand Island also supported the resolution, saying take this as a call for Congress to look in

depth at the issue, and offer their best deliberative solution."

Chambers spoke again saying, "I don't pretend to know when a fetus becomes a human being; scientific study has constantly changed the view of human life. Nobody has even defined or proven the existence of a human soul."

He asked resolution supporters why they thought Congress should decide the issue by constitutional amendment and why they disagreed with the Supreme Court decision.

"Abortions are a fact of life," he said. "What the Legislature should do is to study the issue as it exists; to see the facilities and the care and treatment of people who have abortions."

Such a study would not be an endorsement of abortion, he said.

DeCamp agreed with Chambers that no one knows when human life begins. He said the legal premise should be to assume life begins at conception unless proven otherwise.

DeCamp later told about 80 Coalition for Life demonstrators on Centennial Mall that they were being hoodwinked by Congressmen who say they support them.

"You aren't going to get results in Washington," he said. DeCamp urged the demonstrators to continue their efforts and "raise a hue and cry" until they are rewarded with action.

DeCamp missed the resolution vote. He told Lt. Gov. Gerald Whelan, presiding over the Legislature, that he was taking a long-distance phone call, and would have voted aye "on this issue that concerns me deeply."

Whelan told him to submit a "deeply worded" written message to that effect to be included in the Legislative journal.

The vote on LR113 was: For: Anderson, Barnett, Bereuter, Burbach, Carsten, Clark, Cope, Dickinson, Duis, Dworak, Fitzgald, George, Goodrich, Hasebroock, Johnson, Kelly, Kennedy, Keyes, Kime, Koch, Kermer, F. Lewis, R. Lewis, Mahoney, Marvel, Moylan, Rasmussen, Rummary, Schmit, Skarda, Stone, Stull, Swigart, Syas, Warner, Wiltse.

Against: Chambers, Fowler, Marsh, Mills, Nichol
Not voting: Burrows, Cavanaugh, DeCamp, Leudtke, Murphy, Savage, Simpson.

Panelists argue state's abortion law in terms of medicine, intuition, Bible

Four panelists sponsored by Concerned Pro-Life Students debated the legality of abortion in terms of Nebraska's law, the Bible, medical definitions and a woman's institution Thursday night before about 30 persons in the Nebraska Union.

State Sen. Donald Dworak of Columbus said the Nebraska law on abortion is full of questions on when an abortion can be performed because it does not specify when life starts.

Speaking on abortion according to God's laws, Rev. Alfred Ernst of Lincoln's Trinity Lutheran Church said any pregnancy stage is the beginning of life.

This attitude of a mother's not wanting her baby must be combated, though, Mrs. Betty Evans, a Lincoln social worker said. Evans, who said she has one child, said Pro-Life also should be concerned with this problem.

"We have to go farther than being against abortion," she said. "We have to help to make that baby welcome."

"Volumes and volumes" of information on the psychological problems of pregnant women have been written, according to Dr. Eugene Schwenke, a Lincoln general practitioner. He said the unwed mother presents the single greatest problem.

Schwenke said he thinks life starts at the time of conception and fertilization. In the first three months of pregnancy, which the U.S. Supreme Court has termed acceptable for having an abortion, Schwenke said the baby is as developed as it's going to be.

Because the fetus, if removed during these first three months, would not be able to life, Schwenke said, he would agree with persons who say the fetus is not then a potential human being.

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