

opinion/editorial

Regents' abortion ban denies women's right to choose

The NU Board of Regents erred Friday in prohibiting elective abortions at University Hospital in Omaha.

While their 7-0 decision responding to the birth and subsequent death of a live fetus Sept. 6 certainly will prevent similar occurrences in the future, it does not address the real issue in the matter. Instead, the regents' decision will unfairly penalize Nebraska women and infringe on their right to terminate unwanted pregnancies as upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court—because of a singular error in medical judgment.

The problem confronting the university by the live birth of a fetus during an abortion at the hospital is not the fact that abortions are performed there; it is the fact that an abortion was performed on a woman whose pregnancy's length was incorrectly diagnosed.

Doctors estimated after the abortion that the fetus was 22 to 27 weeks old, as opposed to a 19 to 20 week diagnosis made before the procedure. Hospital policy permits abortions on women less than 22 weeks pregnant based on their last menstrual period.

To prohibit abortions altogether because one out of hundreds administered at the hospital since 1973 had unintended consequences is akin to banning all surgery performed under general anesthesia because a fraction of a percent of those receiving the anesthetic dies or suffers physical damage.

A woman who decides to have a second-trimester abortion makes a serious decision. A late abortion is not a pretty thing; it means inducing labor, giving birth to a partially formed fetus and enduring the accompanying physical and mental pain. The later an abortion is performed, the greater the risk of complications and

danger to a woman's health. But it is a woman's legal right.

By prohibiting elective abortions at University Hospital, the regents have forced women seeking elective second-trimester abortions to risk their health by prolonging their pregnancies. The hospital was the only Midwest facility routinely admitting patients for saline-induced abortions. Women must now seek such abortions in cities no closer than Denver or Minneapolis.

It would have been far more reasonable had the regents required more extensive testing be done on women seeking second-trimester abortions, such as using ultrasound waves to determine pregnancies' lengths. That would afford better assurance that fetuses to be aborted are not yet viable, while allowing women the right to choose to have abortions at the least possible health risk. It is hoped that court action or regental reconsideration will restore that right to Nebraska's women.

Brenda Moskovits

letters

On behalf of the Senate and Residents of Harper Hall, we wish to express our opposition to the site selected for the proposed new Alumni Center. We feel that the considerable inconvenience caused to the residents of Selleck Quadrangle by the loss of the metered lot west of their place of residence far out-weighs the advantage of building the Alumni Center on that particular site.

The metered lot which would be replaced by the new Alumni Center is the only place in which Selleck residents can park conveniently close to their living quarters. The nearest 2 lots are 2½ blocks away from Selleck. It is intolerable to force the residents to transport furniture, heavy boxes, etc., over this distance when moving in; and it would be practically impossible to have all the residents move in from the few spaces along 15th Street in front of the Quadrangle. The residents of no other hall have to put up with such problems, and none should be forced to.

It should be noted that we are not opposed in any way to the construction of a new alumni center. Many alumni offer considerable contributions to the University, and the planned center would have many benefits for students as well as alumni. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that the University is first and foremost an educational institution, and that the needs of its current students should come before the convenience of those who have already graduated. A considerable injustice will be done to the students residing in Selleck if the Alumni Center is built on the proposed site, and we support the Selleck residents wholeheartedly in their efforts to have the location of the center reconsidered.

Bill Flack
Vice-President, Harper Hall
Reg Kuhn
Secretary, Harper Hall

Johnson deserves apology

I believe in having a free press and that both sides of a given story be shown. Newspapers have quite a bit of power and influence over people's feelings with what they print. So when it comes to disrupting someone's life and making the accusations that the Daily Nebraskan made against Linnea Johnson, they should have reported the accurate story (i.e., misquotings and printing the letters that don't conflict with their own opinion).

This letter might look like some sort of cover-up being that I work in the English Department, but that is not the case at all. I just feel that the Daily Nebraskan is being unfair.

At the very least, there should be an apology due Linnea Johnson from the Daily Nebraskan.

We all are human, and since a newspaper is operated by people, there will be some errors. But let us hope that when we do make a mistake, we can admit it.

Peggy Williams



Regents grovel before money whip

The NU Board of Regents has once again shown its commitment to athletics at UNL. Friday it performed the fastest two-foot grovel ever.

jerry fairbanks

It was less than five days from Monday, when local newspapers ran a story about a botched abortion at the NU Med Center on Friday, when the regents voted 7-0 to outlaw most abortions there. Benedict Arnold wrestled with his conscience longer.

The meeting itself was a masterpiece in stagecraft.

State Sen. Bernice Labeledz of Omaha showed up at a morning subcommittee meeting and let everyone know how upset she was that the world wasn't neat, clean and nice like a Sunday School class.

Then she threatened to attach riders to the university's appropriations bill next session specifically prohibiting abortions at the Med Center. She backed up this threat by saying she had 18 senators lined up to support her.

The general discussion at the afternoon meeting consisted mostly of how the regents could fudge on a 1974 District Court ruling that said it was illegal for the regents to pull this sort of state paternalism. The consensus was that the future doctors who graduated from the Med Center will learn how to perform abortions by working on women whose lives are in danger and by osmosis.

Lest anyone think that the regents won't perform at least a single feeble gesture honoring democratic tradition, they were nice enough to let five women hurry by a speaker's stand and say a few (very few) words of another viewpoint.

Then Sen. Labeledz returned and cracked the money whip. When anti-abortionists talk, elected officials bow and scrape. Non-therapeutic abortions were out.

There's nothing wrong with the board listening to the propaganda of well-financed pressure groups like the anti-abortionists. It's nice to see even small evidence they remember they're elected by the people and that's whose power they're exercising. But I remember two other actions the board took.

One is the tuition hike. Demonstrations, petitions, testifying at the meeting all came to naught. It passed.

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