

My name is Peter Doyle. I live in Portland.

I'm here to speak in favor of LD 924, An Act To Educate Women on the Medical Risks Associated with Abortion; LD 116, An Act To Require a 24-hour Waiting Period prior to an Abortion; and LD 1457, An Act To Strengthen the Consent Laws for Abortions Performed on Minors and Incapacitated Persons.

The emphasis of my comments will be on the notion of informed consent, an essential component of the standard of care. Before any physician may perform any surgery, it is essential that he or she obtain informed consent and that this consent is not coerced in any way, otherwise it is considered invalid and the physician could be found guilty of a felony assault.

In the case of these three bills, what is being attempted is to ensure that any woman undergoing an abortion receive the same standard of care that any other surgery would warrant. Let me illustrate by way of my own experience. I had back surgery in 1992. Prior to that surgery I met with my surgeon. He did a full physical. He reviewed the MRI with me. He pointed out all the risks. There was no coercion involved in that decision from a third party. I went to on the operating table fully informed of the benefits and the risks with sufficient time to reconsider if I decided it was not the right treatment. So my question to you: Why should abortion be any different? Why shouldn't a woman be guaranteed all the medical facts when making what many would consider a life-altering decision?

In contrast to my personal experience, the personal experience of several women in Pennsylvania came to light this past January in the grisly details of the notorious abortionist, Kermit Gosnell. This is in a state that has some fairly strong regulations surrounding the practice of abortion, but these regulations were intentionally not enforced. Here are some specifics as reported by the Associated Press and from the grand jury report against Gosnell, excerpted as follows:

Davida Johnson is also speaking out about the abortion Gosnell did and she said the abortion facility he ran was filthy — with women sitting on blood-stained recliners. She told the Associated Press she had a change of heart about the abortion but was forced to continue the abortion.

"I said, 'I don't want to do this,' and he smacked me. They tied my hands and arms down and gave me more medication," she told AP.

Johnson indicates she began having psychological issues following the forced abortion and she blames Gosnell for a mental illness she now suffers from and says she has had four miscarriages following the abortion.

The report contains a couple hundred pages exposing how state officials did relatively little to inspect abortion centers, how the abortion industry covered up the Gosnell situation, and how women were injured by abortions performed at the shoddy abortion clinic with little regard for their health or welfare. The report notes:

One woman, for example, was left lying in place for hours after Gosnell tore her cervix and colon while trying, unsuccessfully, to extract the fetus. Relatives who came to pick her up were refused entry into the building; they had to threaten to call the police. They eventually found her inside, bleeding and incoherent, and transported her to the hospital, where doctors had to remove almost half a foot of her intestines.

On another occasion, Gosnell simply sent a patient home, after keeping her mother waiting for hours, without telling either of them that she still had fetal parts inside her. Gosnell insisted she was fine, even after signs of serious infection set in over the next several days. By the time her mother got her to the emergency room, she was unconscious and near death.

A nineteen-year-old girl was held for several hours after Gosnell punctured her uterus. As a result of the delay, she fell into shock from blood loss, and had to undergo a hysterectomy.

One patient went into convulsions during an abortion, fell off the procedure table, and hit her head on the floor. Gosnell wouldn't call an ambulance, and wouldn't let the woman's companion leave the building so that he could call an ambulance.

The opposition to this legislation claims they hold the mantle of "choice." If they truly believe in choice, should not this "choice" involve an awareness of all the facts, along with some additional time to mull it over? Is that not reasonable? Waiting periods exist or have been proposed for all sorts of other decisions, from purchasing a gun to obtaining a marriage license. Given the gravity of this decision, does it not warrant an extra day to consider where it might lead her down life's road? I've outlined in gruesome detail the consequences of the failure to enforce such regulations on the abortion industry in Pennsylvania. The women of Maine deserve what the women of Pennsylvania had by right of law but was denied them: the right to be treated with dignity and respect when they seek medical treatment and to give truly informed consent as they make this life-altering decision.

Submitted by:

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