

LWV Ohio Statehouse Day – March 19, 2013

LWVO Lobbyist Report

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

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In the last General Assembly, 2 bills were passed: H.B. 63 -- Judicial bypass restrictions, signed by Gov. Kasich on 11/4/11; and H.B. 78 - Abortion ban after viability, signed by him on 12/21/11.

Since then, there have been several bills introduced, many had hearings, some passed the full House, but not the Senate. We fully expected we'd see some of these bills in Lame Duck, especially the H.B. 125, "Heartbeat" bill, which would outlaw abortion if a heartbeat can be detected. But in the middle of December, 2012, Senate Pres. Niehaus called for the hearings to end, thereby ending these bills for the 2011-2012 session. Sen. Niehaus was term limited at the end of December.

One interesting development is that the 2 pro-life groups disagreed on the Heartbeat bill. Right-to-Life Pres. Michael Gonidakis thought it went too far down the road to unconstitutionality, while Faith2Action Pres. Janet Folger Porter felt that now was the best climate to get it passed. Niehaus, who is pro-life, asked them to work on amending H.B. 125 to a version they could agree on, but this did not happen.

FYI -- Gov. Kasich recently appointed Michael Gonidakis to the State Medical Board.

As of this writing (Valentine's Day, 2013) there has not been one anti-choice bill introduced. We are rather astounded. We expect that the Heartbeat bill will come back, along with something else called PRENDA -- Parental Non-Discrimination Act. Based on federal legislation, this would make it a 3rd-degree felony for anyone purposely performing an abortion knowing that that such abortion is sought based on the gender of the child.

Some Pro-Choice legislation was introduced in the last session, notably Prevention First, a comprehensive bill including many parts; CARE, Compassionate Assistance for Rape Emergencies; and sex-ed stand alone bills. None of these were scheduled for any hearings.

LWVO continues to be a member of FOCO, The Freedom of Choice Ohio Coalition. Actually, we were one of the groups that was instrumental in forming FOCO many years ago. After all the hateful things said about women and abortion in the 2012 election, I would like to quote from RCRC, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a FOCO partner, from their Reproductive Rights and Justice statement:

"Religions hold that all human life is sacred -- and includes the life of a woman as well as that of a potential child. This belief inspires many religious communities to work for a world in which women are healthy and every child is wanted, loved, and cared for. Those religious communities support birth control, safe and legal abortion, and health care for all."

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