



Statement on HB 314

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On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Alabama, I am writing in opposition to HB 314 which criminalizes abortion. After seriously examining this issue, the League of Women Voters believes that HB 314's approach to the issue of abortion is wrong in several significant respects.

- First, the **bill criminalizes the practice of medicine and interjects the government into an inappropriate role in the patient-doctor relationship**. It dictates how doctors should practice medicine and presumes that they require this level of direction. It is not unreasonable to conclude that in many situations whether a medical decision violates the law will turn on a series of facts, especially with respect to the medical emergency exception where definitions of "reasonable medical judgment" or "medical emergency" provide little reassurance to a doctor facing 10 years to life if a prosecutor disagrees with his or her judgment. Nor is the fact that the law provides in the case of a serious health risk to the mother that a second concurring physician opinion within 180 days after the abortion is prima facie evidence of a permitted procedure.
- Additionally, the **bill substitutes the government as the decision maker** in situations that are best left to a woman, her pastor, her doctor, and her family - decisions that traditionally are best made in private without governmental interference.
- **The bill does not really protect life**. There are no exceptions for incest or rape, thus requiring women to bear the children of their rapists. There is no removal of parental rights for rapists who produce children. This would mean that victims of rape or incest would have to fight their assailants for custody or visitation for the children that result from these horrific acts.
- Once they are born, children in Alabama face significant challenges. In increasing numbers, they are born to moms who do not receive adequate pre-natal care, have low birth weight, and lack access to health care in rural areas. This aspect of the recent constitutional amendment regarding the sanctity of unborn life and the rights of unborn children is woefully unaddressed by the legislature.
- Finally, **HB 314 will cost the state of Alabama a significant amount of money** at a time that it is struggling to meet its financial obligations. The bill's sponsor has been quoted in the news media stating that the purpose of the bill is to invite litigation that will ultimately get to the Supreme Court. The State of Alabama will, therefore, be responsible for the cost of such litigation – an obligation that seems fiscally irresponsible.