

Phoenix doctor opposes bill that would protect babies who survive abortion

Nico Santos, KPNX 6:16 PM, MST February 23, 2017



PHOENIX - Should Arizona doctors be required to provide lifesaving efforts after abortions if a baby shows signs of life?

Senate Bill 1367 was introduced by Republican Arizona Senator Steve Smith (R-District 11). It aims to protect the lives of those babies if they survive an abortion at 20 weeks of the mother's pregnancy or longer.

PREVIOUS: [Arizona Senate requires intervention in abortion with signs of life \(http://www.12news.com/news/politics/arizona-senate-requires-intervention-in-abortion-with-signs-of-life/412859391\)](http://www.12news.com/news/politics/arizona-senate-requires-intervention-in-abortion-with-signs-of-life/412859391)

Currently, the law allows medical personal to let the baby die.

"I think this is a tremendous step backward," said Steve Nelson OB/GYN of Camelback Women's Health.

The measure would require locations that perform abortions at 20 weeks or late, to provide lifesaving measures for babies that show signs of life, including breathing, a heartbeat, umbilical cord pulsing, or definite voluntary muscle movement.

Sen. Smith said he sponsored this bill because of stories he has heard of a baby possibly surviving abortion when a nurse thought the baby moved.

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"No medical attention whatsoever was given to that child as it laid there living and ultimately died 20 minutes later," said Smith.

Dr. Nelson's biggest issue is that the abortions he performs on mothers at 20 weeks or later aren't because the mothers don't want the babies.

He said the termination of a pregnancy after 20 weeks is done when the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother or when the baby has a condition that will quickly end its life anyway.

"These are babies that only have minutes in many cases to live," said Nelson. "They have conditions of their brain, of their heart, of their lungs, that are incompatible with life."

As it stands, there are multiple medical experts who weigh in on the decision to terminate a pregnancy that late, and they come to an agreement with the family of the unborn baby.

Nelson said there are also medical expert present during such abortions to make a case-by-case suggestion if lifesaving efforts are worth it for the baby and family.

"If the family says, 'Save the baby,' by all means we'll do everything we can," said Nelson. But he said legislatures should not enforce a one-size-fits-all mandate when each abortion and the prognosis for each baby with certain congenital health conditions is different.

"Why should those babies not spend their last moments in the arms of their mothers as opposed to the hands of medical personal for an absolutely useless medical intervention?"

All Republicans, and only one Democrat, voted to approve SB 1367 -- a fact that disappointed Smith, because he said this should be a nonpartisan concern.

"We're not talking about the baby inside of the mom. We're not talking about Planned Parenthood," said Smith. "We're saying, 'You have a live child in front of you. You really are going to deny it medical attention?'"

If it becomes law, medical professionals would have to administer every lifesaving option viable, or they could face paying penalties and potentially lose their licenses for not complying.

"How could you possibly say, 'It's not worth it'? Would you say that about anybody else in society?" Smith said. "You've got to be kidding me."

You can [read the full text of the SB 1367 on the Arizona Legislature website \(https://apps.azleg.gov/BillStatus/GetDocumentPdf/449603\)](https://apps.azleg.gov/BillStatus/GetDocumentPdf/449603) here [\(https://apps.azleg.gov/BillStatus/GetDocumentPdf/449603\)](https://apps.azleg.gov/BillStatus/GetDocumentPdf/449603).

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