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Calling Them 'Heartbeat' Laws Is Misleading And Cruel



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Last week, abortion providers in Georgia filed a [federal lawsuit](#) to prevent the state from implementing a new law that would **effectively ban** the procedure six weeks into a pregnancy. It's one of several restrictive laws that states have passed in the last year, plus several more now being considered, that are often referred to as 'fetal heartbeat laws' or 'heartbeat bans.'

The term relates to how doctors have sometimes described a baby's development to expectant parents around that stage: during the first trimester of pregnancy, early signs of cardiac activity, specifically a tiny, pulsing rhythm, can be detected in cells that later form the human heart.

than two months into a pregnancy — a time when many people don't yet know they're pregnant, and when embryos still face a difficult run-up ahead.

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For example, miscarriage most commonly occurs during the first trimester. It happens for a variety of reasons that are almost inevitably out of pregnant persons' control, and is the outcome of an estimated 15 to 20% of US pregnancies (though experts believe that unreported and undetected miscarriages bring that number even higher).

At this point, the fetus is still in the embryonic phase, and microscopic processes are beginning that will determine the development of systems throughout the body. Thanks to modern-day ultrasound and other medical technology, doctors are able to detect some of the earliest signs of these processes and let expectant parents know what's starting to happen inside.

In this kind of context does the idea of a 'fetal heartbeat' come up with early pregnancies, when long-term pictures — not current technical details — are being discussed. Dr. Sarah Horvath, a Darney/Landy Fellow at the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, explained by email:

When speaking with pregnant women, we often do refer to the “heartbeat” early in pregnancy, because that is familiar language to our patients. However, what we see with existing ultrasound technology at six weeks is not actually a heart, yet. It is a rudimentary structure in an early phase of development. Using the “heartbeat” terminology in an effort to restrict abortion is done in order to drive an emotional response in people, but it is not medically accurate.

Dr. Robyn Schickler, OB/GYN and fellow with Physicians for Reproductive Health, told [The Cut](#)'s Katie Heaney that describing any activity detected by ultrasound at that stage as a heartbeat “personifies the fetus into something it's not.” Heaney wrote in May, “[And] what arose as a colloquialism between doctors and patients has, in the case of the fight over abortion rights, done more harm than good, says Schickler.”

In the case of reproductive health overall, allowing this colloquialism to gain steam is also potentially dangerous, and arguably cruel, to persons with wanted pregnancies as well as unwanted ones.

popularized misconception that the child-to-be had a heartbeat, one of humankind's most poignant and telltale traits, could easily be emotionally troubling; the same could apply for those who choose to end their pregnancies, and already must often withstand waiting periods, uninvited images or suggested alternatives, and various other obstacles.

On the other, it can lead to increasingly restrictive reproductive health laws that serve to equate the potential life of a fetus, which has only begun its exponential climb toward personhood, with the life of the person growing it.

See also: [The Endless Cost Of Maligning Abortion](#)

The idea of upholding one kind of human life while dismissing another is controversial, in fact, on both sides of the debate.

One pro-life reader expressed his experience of this ethical conflict in an email to me today, writing: "When are pro-abortionists like yourself going to at least ACKNOWLEDGE that people on the other side of this believe that ALL human life is precious and no man or woman has the right to kill. Instead you hide behind the words 'access to healthcare' and pretend that the motive is to control a woman's body. So dishonest!"

While I don't know which articles or points of mine he was referring to, and I do think that in the very least the *effect* of such laws is controlling women's bodies, we agree on a critical point: I truly believe that, for most pro-choice and pro-life Americans, their position boils down to a reverence for life.

For those who treasure it, demonstrating the value of a life, or comparing one life to another, is a deeply moral matter. Throughout history, this has also made it a medical one: across all cultures and religions, we have contemplated how and when life begins, the circumstances in which it departs, and what makes it uniquely flourish or fail.

Over the centuries, we've also had different definitions for life and death, and corresponding moral stances for the time and place. We've chosen to define life's departure by the lack of breath, or a heartbeat, or brain activity; a variety of ethical debates on how we prolong life continue.

We have explored whether life as a valued, morally compelling essence begins at birth, conception, or even sooner; in some Christian faiths, for example, the Old Testament story of Onan has come to suggest a moral imperative not to waste or 'spill' a man's 'seed' (if not, as at the time, also a practical one pertaining to familial law).

In general, we make those definitions and moral decisions by observing human life around us, and based on what we know about it.

When it comes to defining the start of a human life, we currently look not for (literal) heartbeats or brainwaves, or the organs that produce them, but rather their precursors in one parent's body.

We know that most fetuses proceed along the developmental timeline at roughly the same pace, but every pregnancy is different, and the same medical milestones can be reached weeks apart (or, sometimes, missed). That fact makes one-size-fits-all abortion cutoffs a real problem for all pregnancy patients, according to the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, whether those laws stipulate six weeks or 20.

As Former ACOG Executive Vice President Hal Lawrence noted [in 2015](#), "Gestation is a gradual process, and it can vary depending on the circumstances, such as the woman's health ... [So] more than 40 years ago, the Supreme Court stipulated that abortion is legal until a fetus is viable."

We know that both difficult or easy pregnancies can too often lead to a parent's death, and that illegal, unsafe abortions cause injury and claim lives. We also know that, whether a pregnancy is wanted but unsafe or unwanted but on the road toward viability, lack of access to safe and legal abortion presents an inherent risk.

We also know that for billions of living, palpitating humans on this planet, life is already very difficult and crowded at this stage. Like everyone else, I personally know some who couldn't survive, or must get by on very little of what keeps us alive.

And I think most of us would agree that, when science and culture are still struggling to solve some of life's most dire problems, each one of us has a responsibility to do what we think is right, and to always try to communicate as clearly as we can.

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I'm a freelance writer covering tech, media, science, and culture. My background includes the areas of writing, editing, and education, and I received Bachelor and Master... [Read More](#)

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Business Technology Platforms Give Midsize Companies A Competitive Edge



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By Dan Lahl, Global Vice President of Product Marketing, SAP

Technology advancements and marketplace changes are making it far easier for any business to make bold moves quickly. This new reality is certainly not lost on midsize companies, as they watch their larger contemporaries start to embrace speed and agility in their new business initiatives.

In response to this new environment, growing companies are facing a pivotal question: how can they keep their edge in innovation and customer service by tapping into intelligent technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotic process automation?

One solution is the adoption of a business technology platform that simplifies and accelerates the delivery of new experience-centric applications, processes and systems to keep ahead of the pack.

IDC predicts that this will be one of the top trends for midsize companies in the 2020s. The IDC infographic, “[The Roaring 2020s: Six Trends Impacting Companies in the Next Decade](#),” reveals that more than 25% of midsize companies will build a connected ecosystem of platform providers to accelerate digitization while using service providers and integrators to augment existing in-house capabilities.

An opportunity to redefine velocity and scale

every growing company. Their fast, sustainable growth likely points to the benefits of a technology platform, setting the foundation on which a multitude of products, services, capabilities, and experiences can be added in real time.

A *business* technology platform integrates with and extends application solutions, databases, analytics, and self-services into a harmonious landscape of technology solutions, providing simple and rapid business innovation. Unified and open enough to embed intelligence across integrated, modular applications, the advantages that the business technology platform offers can be visible across the enterprise – from online and physical stores to sales, marketing, manufacturing, logistics, and the supply chain.

But don't be fooled: massive enterprises are not the only ones that can achieve such success with business technology platforms. Thanks to the choice of running their business technology platform on any of the affordable cloud providers and hyperscalers, midsize businesses can now leverage the same capabilities to not only protect but also strengthen their inherent competitive advantages.

Take, for example, [c-Com](#). The growing German startup is orchestrating and simplifying the tool lifecycle management process of an international client base of manufacturers of automobiles, airplanes, and other complex products. By using a cloud-based business technology platform that features open-source technology, the business moves C-parts – such as nuts, bolts, screws, and commodity tools – and other resources around easily among business partners. And because c-Com is using a technology platform, they are delivering new business features and services to their customers quickly and easily, thereby staying ahead of their competition.

c-Com's platform-enabled business strategy is paying off as it provides a uniquely valuable service that is saving customers a great deal of time and effort. In fact, large automotive and aerospace companies are either using, evaluating, or considering the service for themselves.

A rediscovery of the true advantage of midsize businesses

Most midsize companies are already on the path to adopting a business technology platform. They spend years building up their processes, supply chain, partnerships, sales and marketing channels, and customer base. Along the way, they create or invest in new applications or acquire the latest capabilities and integrate them into every aspect of the business.

and strengths. This approach allows businesses to maintain their competitive edge by evolving as the marketplace and customers demand – without disrupting existing operational experiences.

Listen to an excerpt of our Webinar, “Winning in the 2020s: Six Trends Every Midsize Needs to Know,” with Timo Elliott, Global Innovation Evangelist from SAP and guest speaker Shari Lava, Research Director Small and Medium Business at IDC.



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