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Catholic teaching on abortion is clear, says archbishop

On May 19, Governor Kathleen Sebelius vetoed Senate Bill 528. This bill passed by the Kansas Legislature required abortion clinics to provide information documenting the reasons for late term abortions.

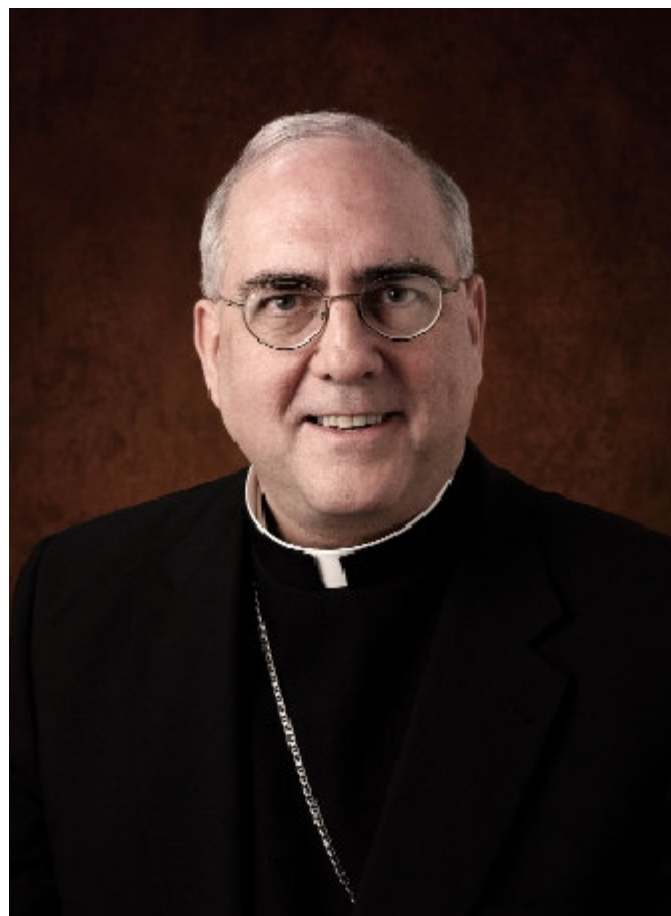
Gov. Sebelius in her veto message stated: "Abortion is an important moral concern to all Kansans. My Catholic faith teaches me that life is sacred. Personally, I believe abortion is wrong."

I received several letters by individuals who disagreed with the governor's veto. They objected in part because they were convinced, as was I, of the merits of the bill. The reporting requirements of SB 528 would have helped to enforce the existing limitations in Kansas law stipulating the circumstances when late term abortions are permitted.

The governor in her veto message indicated that she vetoed the bill because she was concerned about protecting the privacy of women seeking an abortion. The legislators, who introduced Senate Bill 528 and the majorities in both the Senate and the House who voted in favor of the bill, believed that existing Kansas and federal laws more than adequately protected the confidentiality of women seeking abortion.

I readily admit that the governor is more knowledgeable about the law than I am. Legislators often disagree legitimately over the meaning and consequences of a statute. However, what those who wrote to me found most offensive in the governor's veto message was the identification of herself as Catholic in light of her long-standing support for legalized abortion.

To listen to the archbishop's commentary [click here.](#)



Reviewing the record of Gov. Sebelius when she served in the Kansas House of Representatives, it is difficult to find a single instance, either in a procedural or substantive vote, where she acted in a manner that would afford unborn children the maximum protection. In the 1980s and 1990s then- Representative Sebelius voted to weaken or eliminate even such modest measures as parental notification, waiting periods and informed consent.

As governor, she twice has vetoed bills attempting to protect the health and safety of women by more tightly regulating abortion clinics. The governor's rationale for these vetoes was, in part, an opposition to regulations of abortion in a manner not required of every other outpatient surgery clinic. The problem with this reasoning is that abortion is not just like any other outpatient surgery. It is the only "surgery" that always results in the death of a child. After the newspaper reports of the horrible conditions of a Kansas City, Kan., abortion clinic and the death of a woman in Wichita after an abortion, why not place tighter restrictions on abortion clinics to protect at least the health of the mother?

Her vetoes of these clinic regulation bills were even more troubling in light of her history of accepting campaign contributions from George Tiller, the Wichita abortionist, who has gained a national reputation for performing late term abortions.

If you think that my evaluation of the governor's record is too harsh, then I invite you to visit the Web site for Emily's List. Emily's List is a political action committee that funds and supports only pro-choice women. Gov. Sebelius is profiled on the Web site and is quoted as saying: "I have always led the fight to ensure that abortion is safe, legal, and rare." The profile also proudly asserts: "As governor she [Kathleen Sebelius] has vetoed legislation to severely limit women's choices."

Abortion is never safe because it always results in the death of a child. One can hardly call abortion rare when there are more than a million performed every year in the United States and more than 45 million performed since abortion's legalization in 1973. It is never permissible for a Catholic to support the legalization of the killing of innocent lives by abortion, much less to lead the fight for legal abortion.

In my responsibilities as archbishop, I have an obligation to make certain that Catholics understand clearly the doctrinal and moral teachings of the church. In his 1995 encyclical letter, "The Gospel of Life," Pope John Paul II reiterated the clear and consistent teaching of the church:

"Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, and in communion with the Bishops of the Catholic Church, I confirm that the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral. This doctrine, based upon that unwritten law which man, in the light of reason, finds in his own heart (cf. Rom 2: 14-15), is reaffirmed by Sacred Scripture, transmitted by the Tradition of the Church and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium. The deliberate decision to deprive an innocent human being of his life is always morally evil and can never be licit either as an end itself or as a means to a good end" (no. 57).

I urge all Kansas Catholics to pray for Gov. Sebelius that she might reconsider her long held position supporting legalized abortion. Regarding

the Catholic Church 's teaching concerning abortion, let no one be confused. The church's understanding, as reiterated by Pope John Paul II, has been clear and consistent for two thousand years.

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