

Statement of Gov. Mike Rounds on the Signing Of House Bill 1215

“I have signed House Bill 1215 into law. It is An Act to establish certain legislative findings, to reinstate the prohibition against certain acts causing the termination of an unborn human life, to prescribe a penalty therefore, and to provide for the implementation of such provisions under certain circumstances.

HB 1215 passed South Dakota’s legislature with bi-partisan sponsorship and strong bi-partisan support in both houses. Its purpose is to eliminate most abortions in South Dakota. It does allow doctors to perform abortions in order to save the life of the mother. It does not prohibit the taking of contraceptive drugs before a pregnancy is determined, such as in the case of rape or incest.

In the history of the world, the true test of a civilization is how well people treat the most vulnerable and most helpless in their society. The sponsors and supporters of this bill believe that abortion is wrong because unborn children are the most vulnerable and most helpless persons in our society. I agree with them.

Because this new law is a direct challenge to the Roe versus Wade interpretation of the Constitution, I expect this law will be taken to court and prevented from going into effect this July. That challenge will likely take years to be settled and it may ultimately be decided by the United States Supreme Court. Our existing laws regulating abortions will remain in effect.

The reversal of a Supreme Court opinion is possible. For example, in 1896, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the Plessy versus Ferguson case that a state could require racial segregation in public facilities if the facilities offered to different races were equal. However, fifty-eight years later, the Supreme Court reconsidered that opinion and reversed itself in Brown versus Board of Education. It proclaimed that separate could not produce equal. The 1954 Court realized that the earlier interpretation of our Constitution was wrong.

HB 1215 will give the United States Supreme Court a similar opportunity to reconsider an earlier opinion.

While this is a state and national issue, I want to emphasize that whatever the courts decide, South Dakotans will continue to care about both the unborn child and mother. If we are pro-life, we must recognize the need to take care of women who are faced with a difficult pregnancy. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the pregnancy, we cannot protect the innocent child, unless we protect and care for the mother. We must help each mother to see the value of the gift that is a child, and nurture the mother for her own sake and for the sake of her child.

Our state is committed to helping greater numbers of pregnant woman who will allow their babies to grow inside them and be born. In both the private and public sector in South Dakota, we have healthcare options, economic assistance before and after birth, adoption services, and, most importantly, people who want to help pregnant women, young mothers and their children.

There are also many people in South Dakota who will continue to help those women who have had abortions in the

past. We want those women to know that we care about them, too.”