

Pro-Life Bills Advance

North Dakota's personhood bill, which defines a fertilized egg as a person, is one of several pro-life measures to make state-level gains.

✖ **Feb. 27 2009** – Pro-life legislation advanced in several states this week.

On Wednesday, the Arizona House Health and Human Services Committee unanimously endorsed a Republican-sponsored bill that would require a pre-abortion waiting period and mandatory disclosures to women seeking abortions, the Associated Press (AP) reported.

The measure also includes a “right of conscience” provision that allows pharmacists and health care providers to refuse to participate in abortions or emergency contraception if they object on moral grounds.

Democrats boycotted the committee hearing, saying the legislation would limit the availability of abortion and emergency contraception.

Cathi Herrod, president of the Center for Arizona Policy, said the legislation would not overturn abortion but would help women make informed decisions about abortion, the AP reported.

The bill now goes before the full House for a vote. If it passes, observers say the bill may find favor with Republican Gov. Jan Brewer, who describes herself as pro-life. Former Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano vetoed every abortion-related measure passed by the state Legislature, the AP reported.

In South Carolina, state legislators approved a measure on Tuesday requiring women to wait 24 hours after an ultrasound before getting an abortion. After a heated two-year debate, a compromise measure passed last year saying women contemplating

abortion must be asked if they want to see an ultrasound.

Supporters say the waiting period—increased from an hour to a day—will give women time to reflect on their decision. But Democratic opponents said the measure assumes that women can't think for themselves.

The bill, approved 83-28, requires another, perfunctory vote before going to the Senate, the AP said.

Without debate, the House also approved 105-5 a measure entitling children who survive an abortion attempt to be given life-saving treatment. The bill defines a person as anyone who is breathing and has a beating heart after birth, and applies to later-term abortion cases where doctors induce labor, expecting the lungs to be too underdeveloped for breathing.

Earlier this month, the North Dakota House of Representatives approved a measure defining a fertilized egg as a person. The bill, approved on Feb. 17, now awaits passage by the Senate, which like the House is controlled by Republicans. N.D. Gov. John Hoeven is also a Republican.

Personhood advocates say defining "personhood" as the moment an egg is fertilized could unravel a key argument in the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion. Writing for the majority, Justice Harry Blackmun stated that, "[if the] suggestion of personhood [of the fetus] is established, the case, of course, collapses, for the fetus' right to life is then guaranteed specifically by the [14th] Amendment."

Personhood ballot measures were defeated in Montana and Colorado in November, but advocates say the efforts raised the movement's profile. This year five states—Alabama, Maryland, Montana, North Dakota and South Carolina—introduced personhood legislation.

Pro-life advocates have had mixed reactions to personhood movement, with groups such as National Right to Life

organization disagreeing with its tactics and strategy, the *Washington Times* reported. Others worry that the personhood measures would be overturned in court and strengthen the Roe v. Wade legal precedent as a result. The North Dakota Right to Life did not take a position on that state's personhood bill.