

The Wisdom of Waiting Periods for Tattoos and Abortions

As many people are well aware, the spontaneous decision to get “inked” or pierced can leave one with a permanent stamp of regret.

Having your favorite team logo or boyfriend’s name tattooed on your arm may seem like an awesome idea when you’re 18 years old or when you’ve had too much to drink. Later, however, when you are sober or become a grown-up with a real job, you will no doubt feel differently about that previously “inspired” ink.

This all-too-common situation seems to be the impetus behind a newly proposed law in D.C. that would require a 24-hour waiting period before getting a tattoo or piercing.

According to Christine Rousselle of [The Washington Post](#), if the law is passed, D.C. would be the first major city requiring 24-hour waiting periods for tattoos and piercing.

A health department spokesperson explained the reasoning behind the proposal: “We’re making sure when that decision is made that you’re in the right frame of mind and you don’t wake up in the morning ... saying ... ‘What happened?’”

When one considers the permanent nature of tattoos and piercings, waiting periods seem like reasonable protective measures. However, as Rousselle notes in her article, D.C. is not willing to consider common-sense waiting periods for the far more serious and invasive procedure of abortion.

Rousselle points out, “Currently, 26 states have some sort of waiting period prior to an abortive procedure. The District of Columbia has one of the highest abortion rates in the country.”

The Guttmacher Institute reports that in 2008, the most recent year they list, almost 30 percent of pregnancies in Washington, D.C., ended in abortion. That's over 10 percentage points above the national average for the year.

Any state with such a high abortion rate would be remiss not to consider waiting periods for abortion in order to save the lives of unborn children and discourage women from making a decision that could result in a lifetime of heartache, regret and physical complications.

The Supreme Court has consistently upheld state laws that enact mandatory waiting periods for abortion. The reasoning used by the court in upholding laws restricting abortion is clear and indisputable.

The court recognized in *Gonzales v. Carhart* that some women come to regret the choice they have made to "abort the infant they once created and sustained" and that "severe depression and loss of esteem can follow."

It also noted that "the state has an interest in ensuring that so grave a choice is well informed."

Additionally, as the court pointed out in *Harris v. McRae*, abortion is distinguishable from any other medical procedure because "no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life."

Considering the loss of life of an unborn child and the potentially serious consequences for women as a result of abortion, every state should enact waiting periods as a way to reduce the number of abortions and lower the chance that a woman will decide to have an abortion on impulse or under pressure.

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