

Alaska Court: Parents Need to Know About Teen Abortions

An Alaska court Monday upheld most of a voter-approved state law that requires at least one parent to be notified before a minor child can obtain an **abortion**.

Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest filed suit against the law, which voters approved through Ballot Measure 2 in August 2010. The law provides an option for a judge to bypass the notification requirement in special circumstances.

“A young girl’s well-being is worth more than Planned Parenthood’s bottom line. **Abortionists** don’t care more about children than parents do. The court has done the right thing in upholding the will of Alaska’s citizens, who clearly expressed themselves in the 2010 ballot initiative in an effort to protect young girls from predatory abortionists,” Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Steven H. Aden.

“This decision represents a victory for the people of Alaska who, since 1995, have consistently shown their support for parental involvement in a minor girl’s abortion decision-making. The trial court wisely heeded the Alaska Supreme Court’s previous direction that ‘the Alaska Constitution permits a statutory scheme which ensures that parents are notified so that they can be engaged in their daughters’ important decisions in these matters.’”

In its decision in *Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest v. State of Alaska*, the Alaska Superior Court for the 3rd Judicial District at Anchorage concluded that “minors may be pleasantly surprised when underestimated parents support, comfort and affirm them. Or a teen might overlook available resources. Her parents might help raise the child, and so make

college or military service feasible. Parental notification undoubtedly can open doors to unconsidered options for an otherwise isolated young woman. ... The court concludes that the PNL sufficiently fosters a potential for worthwhile family involvement that it passes constitutional muster."

The court upheld the entirety of the law except for two provisions: one that allowed parents to sue in civil court if an abortionist fails to obey the law, and a provision that required clear and convincing evidence at bypass hearings. The court chose to leave enforcement to the state and to allow judges to use a preponderance of the evidence standard when considering a bypass request.