

Defense Rests in Late-Term Abortionist's Murder Trial

Defense lawyers for a Philadelphia abortion doctor accused of killing babies in a clinic that mainly serves low-income women rested their case on Wednesday without calling any witnesses in the high-profile murder trial.

Dr. Kermit Gosnell, 72, is charged with killing four infants during botched abortions and a woman who underwent an abortion and died at a nearby hospital after the procedure at his Women's Medical Society clinic in urban West Philadelphia.

He could face the death penalty if convicted in the case in Common Pleas Court in Philadelphia.

Prosecutors said Gosnell ran a "house of horrors" in a West Philadelphia health clinic where women went for late-term abortions. The district attorney's office contends Gosnell delivered live babies during botched abortions and then deliberately severed their spinal cords, killing them.

Gosnell's defense lawyer, John McMahon, characterized the prosecution of his client, who is black, as "elitist, racist." He said there was no evidence that the babies were delivered alive, noting "the first rule of homicide is someone has to be alive."

The charges against Gosnell and nine of his employees have rekindled the debate in the United States about late-term abortions. Abortions are banned in Pennsylvania after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Gosnell has been in jail since his January 2011 arrest. Eight other defendants have pleaded guilty to a variety of charges and are awaiting sentencing.

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