

THEY SAY:

OPPONENTS’ “BALLOT ARGUMENTS” FOR DEFEAT OF PROPOSITION 73, THE PARENTS’ RIGHT TO KNOW ACT

WE SAY:

PROPONENTS’ RESPONSES AND ARGUMENTS FOR PASSAGE OF PROPOSITION 73, THE PARENTS’ RIGHT TO KNOW ACT

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[G]ood family communication can’t be imposed by government.	Good family communication can not be imposed, but it certainly can be encouraged. In fact, California public school policy is actually an impediment to good family communication, e.g., a school official can arrange for a minor girl to leave campus and have an abortion during school hours without her parents’ knowledge or consent. Ironically, that same minor girl can not go on a school field trip, get an aspirin from the school nurse or participate in school sports without her parents’ express written permission.
Even teenagers who have good relationships with their parents might be afraid to talk to them about something as sensitive as pregnancy.	Proposition 73 will affect minor girls—even ones as young as 10, 11 or 12—and their parents. The opponents have chosen to call the minors “teenagers,” which in many cases, is not true. It is not unusual for a minor child to be “afraid” to talk to his/her parents about mistakes—like failing a test, getting a traffic ticket or wrecking the family car. Society doesn’t find it acceptable for children to “hide” this information; rather, society holds parents responsible—both financially and morally—for the actions of their offspring. Being “afraid” to talk about a pregnancy doesn’t mean that that “fear” should be honored. Counselors or other caring adults should offer to help the pregnant minor speak with her parents.
... [A]ll parents want what is best for their children.	<i>Most</i> parents want what is best for their children. But, some parents actually coerce their daughters into having an abortion. Proposition 73 will allow a minor girl access to the juvenile courts if anyone (parents, sex partner or friends) attempts to pressure or threaten her into procuring an abortion.
Sadly, some teens live in troubled homes...parents might be abusive, or a relative may even have caused the pregnancy.	This statement seems to contradict the previous statement! Note the use of the word “teen” rather than minor girl. Only a small minority of minor girls who become pregnant “live in troubled homes.” Public policy should be crafted to best serve the majority—with provisions for the minority who are special cases. In the case where the possibility of violence is real or where sexual abuse is probable, Proposition 73 provides a judicial by-pass.

<p>This law puts those vulnerable teenagers in harm's way, or forces them to go to Court... She doesn't need a judge, she needs a counselor.</p>	<p>No, actually the <i>minor girl</i> needs a judge. Proposition 73 provides a “judicial bypass,” which means that a pregnant minor who believes she is in harm’s way is granted confidentiality, provided a guardian, and access to a judge. That judge, after hearing the facts, will make an impartial decision on whether or not she is sufficiently mature and well informed to make an abortion decision without notifying her parents. In addition, when abuse has occurred, that judge will report it to the appropriate child protection authority.</p> <p>On the other hand, public school <i>counselors</i> may arrange for a <i>minor girl</i> (in grades 7-12) to obtain an abortion—without her parents’ knowledge, or in the case where the girl has been sexually abused—without reporting her abuse to the proper authorities.</p>
<p>Mandatory notification laws make scared pregnant teens. And if, teenagers turn to illegal, self-induced or back-alley abortions, many will suffer serious injuries and some will die.</p>	<p>Why would a <i>minor girl</i> choose an illegal abortion, when abortion-on-demand is legal for minors in California: at anytime during the pregnancy, for any reason, and financed by Medi-Cal. Abortion services are not only freely available but are publicly advertised.</p> <p>Trotting out the old canard about “back-alley” abortions is an appalling scare tactic. The facts show that there are already more than 30 states which have parental involvement laws. There has been no spike in serious injury or death among teens resulting from “illegal” abortions. In fact, those parental notification and/or consent laws have had the effect of reducing both the number of pregnancies and the number of abortions among minor girls.¹</p>
<p>The real answer to teen pregnancy is prevention...not new laws that endanger our daughters.</p>	<p>The knowledge that a minor girl’s parents will know if she has an abortion does have the effect of reducing the actual number of teenage pregnancies—as evidenced by statistics gathered in the 30 states that currently have parental involvement laws.²</p>
<p>If our daughters can't or won't come to us, we must make sure they get safe medical attention from caring doctors and nurses.</p>	<p>How can a minor be “safe” if her parents do not know that she has had an abortion? If her abortion is a secret, then complications—such as hemorrhage or severe infection—may not be addressed on a timely basis. In addition, following an abortion, she will need emotional support. Indeed, if she keeps her decision a secret—then she is not “safe,” but vulnerable to numerous documented psychological problems such as eating disorders, depression and suicide ideation.</p> <p>On the other hand, if a minor girl is pregnant as the result of sexual abuse, procuring an abortion for her without her parents’ knowledge, or if need be, involving the public authorities, will only exacerbate her problem. She will return to a home or a situation in which her abuser is free to re-abuse.</p>

—Prepared by the California Catholic Conference, 1119 K Street, 2nd Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 443-4851

¹ “Analyzing the Effect of Pro-Life Legislation on the Incidence of Abortion Among Minors,” Michael J. New, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Alabama, presented to the Association for Interdisciplinary Research in Values and Social Change, June 15, 2005.

² Ibid.