

# Texas bishops applaud court decision to uphold sonogram law

AUSTIN, Texas – Texas Catholic bishops applauded the Jan. 11 decision of the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals allowing the state to enforce a sonogram law requiring abortion providers to offer women the opportunity to view the ultrasound images of their unborn children.

“Providing mothers access to sonograms informs them about the risks and complications associated with abortion,” said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston. “These consultations save lives by educating mothers who may not realize that the child in their womb is exactly that – a unique, irreplaceable human life.”

His remarks came in a statement released the same day in Austin by the Texas Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state’s bishops.

The ruling by a three-judge panel of the appeals court ruling overturned a U.S. District Court judge’s temporary injunction against enforcing the measure that requires doctors who perform abortions to show sonograms to patients, and describe the images and fetal heartbeat.

With the 5th Circuit’s ruling, state officials can set a date for enforcing the law even though the case now goes back to the lower court for a final ruling.

The state’s bishops made the sonogram law a high priority during the previous legislative session because they said it would help mothers recognize the humanity of their unborn children and choose life.

Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio said he was particularly impressed by Chief Judge Edith Jones’ recognition of the state’s legitimate interests in protecting life.

“The court today acted to protect the smallest voices of those whom God already knows, alive in their mothers’ wombs,” he said.

Jones disagreed with the argument that the sonogram law infringes on the free speech rights of doctors and patients. She wrote that the “required disclosures of a sonogram, the fetal heartbeat, and their medical descriptions are the epitome of truthful, non-misleading information.”

The Center for Reproductive Rights, which challenged the sonogram law, has 14 days from the decision to ask for a rehearing.

Several states require ultrasounds as part of abortion procedures, according to the Guttmacher Institute. Eleven states require verbal counseling or written materials to include information on accessing ultrasound services. Six states (not including Texas) mandate that an abortion provider perform an ultrasound on each woman seeking an abortion, and require the provider to offer the woman the opportunity to view the image.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry signed the Texas Sonogram Law last May as a stronger version of the 2003 Texas Woman’s Right to Know Act.

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