

Petitions seek override of consent bill's veto

By Noreen Flack
staff writer

Local pro-life groups are seeking statewide support for a petition drive that will attempt to override Gov. James Blanchard's Feb. 23 veto of the parental consent abortion bill. The measure would have required pregnant girls age 17 and younger to get written consent from at least one parent before getting an abortion. In his veto message, Blanchard said he supports family commu-

nication but didn't want a pregnant girl who was the victim of incest to have to go to her father to ask for an abortion.

He called the bill extreme and unreasonable. "This bill is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to take away a woman's right of choice and would, in fact, be destructive to families and place teenagers who face a crisis situation," the governor wrote.

THE DAY the bill was vetoed.

Right to Life-Lifespan of Metro Detroit, based in Livonia, formed the Committee for Parental Rights to initiate a drive and obtain the 191,726 signatures necessary for a valid petition.

Lifespan of Metro Detroit is an independent pro-life group with 11,000 members.

"We were considering doing this six months ago," said Alice Radwick, chairman for the Committee for Parental Rights and a Livonia resident. "We had no reason to believe that Gov. Blanchard would let the bill pass."

"It's going to be more work than just going through the Legislature, and it may be more difficult, but it's the only way," she added.

If the necessary signatures are obtained, a consent bill would go before the Legislature. If passed by a simple majority, the bill would have the force of law and could not be overturned by a gubernatorial veto.

If the Legislature does not act or rejects the petition, the bill would be put on the next general election ballot.

THE COMMITTEE for Parental Rights will be seeking the 191,726 signatures, or 18 percent of the votes cast in the latest race for governor, within 180 days.

If the necessary number of signatures are certified by the state, the Legislature would have 40 days to pass or reject the measure.

The veto came as no surprise because Blanchard has opposed any measure restricting access to abortion.

"Too often we hear the saying, 'Babies having babies,'" Radwick said. "Gov. Blanchard is now calling these girls women. He is saying that we are denying them women's rights. Well, they can't be both babies and women."

"Teenagers are not considered women, they are still considered children under the jurisdiction of their parents," she said. "Parents have the jurisdiction over their minor children in every case except for abortion."

Radwick predicts the group will have no problem meeting the signature quota.

Barbara Listing, president of Right to Life of Michigan, agreed with Radwick that statewide pro-life groups could gather enough signatures, noting Right to Life's success when the group sought a ban on state-funded abortions for welfare recipients.

Blanchard's expected veto came in spite of Right to Life's submission of 170,000 postcards earlier that week in favor of the parental consent bill. The bulk of the 52 cartons of postcards were gathered within two weeks, Listing said.

"The governor has really insulted the parents of this state," Listing said. "He has said to them, 'I don't trust you with the decisions of your teenagers.'"

The parental consent bill earned final legislative approval Feb. 21 with a 65-42 vote of the 110-member House. At least 74 votes are needed to override a veto.

On Feb. 14, the state Senate approved the measure 29-8.

Local representatives voting for the measure were David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield, Mat Dunskiss,

R-Lake Orion and Wilfred Webb, D-Hazel Park.

Representatives Judith Miller, R-Birmingham, Maxine Barman, R-Southfield, Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills and Gordon Sparks, R-Troy, voted against it.

Area senators voting yes were: Doug Cruce, R-Troy, and Richard Fessler, R-Commerce, when it was approved by the Senate.

Voting no was Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills.

Margy Long, a spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Michigan, said her group would consider all legal options in backing Blanchard's veto, including its own petition drive with a proposal allowing girls under 18 to get permission for an abortion from any relative over age 25, a physician, psychologist or counselor.

"This bill really is an attempt to restrict access to abortion and doesn't allow for real possibilities and real options for teens who are at real risk of violent and abusive parents," Long said.



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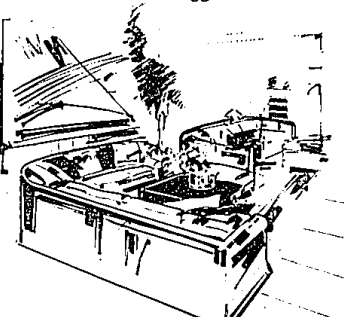
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