

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION BAN ACT OF 1997

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, there are many times when I am so inclined to pay my respects to Senators who have gone out of their way to take a somewhat different stand. And I imagine that during the past week—and throughout the days of debate on the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act in the 104th Congress, as a matter of fact—that if unborn children had a vote or a message of communication and a way to deliver it, they would be sending their love to the distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SANTORUM; and to the distinguished occupant of the chair, Mr. DEWINE of Ohio; and to the able Senator from New Hampshire, Mr. SMITH as well as to the able Senators from Texas and Tennessee, Mr. GRAMM and Mr. FRIST; and on and on.

It has not always been easy to take the pro-life position on this floor, but it is a lot easier and a lot more comfortable now, thanks to these great Senators and others. I personally pay my respects to all who have participated in the debate on the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act up to this point.

By the way, as one who has participated in the abortion debates since the Supreme Court's Roe versus Wade decision in 1973, and as one who has been condemned by many in certain quarters, I am so thankful that the cavalry has arrived in the Senate and now other Senators are standing up to be counted on an issue that involves the survival of this country. I have long felt if our country cannot reconcile with morality and decency and honesty, the position on the deliberate destruction of the most innocent, the most helpless of human life, that may be at peril—lying just down the road—is the survival of this country.

In any case, the abortion debate shifted dramatically when legislation was introduced in the 104th Congress to spare unborn babies from a merciless procedure known as a partial-birth abortion. Because of the debate in Congress and the heightened concern of the American people, the spotlight no longer is focused on the sanctimonious, so-called right to choose; instead, the debate now centers around the ultimate question: Does an innocent, defenseless, unborn child have a right to live? Senators have cast their votes for and against legislation outlawing partial-birth abortions on two previous occasions—first on December 6, 1995, when 54 Senators voted to ban partial-birth abortions. But the President of the United States, Mr. Clinton, saw fit to veto that bill. The Senate, on September 26 of last year, failed to override that Presidential veto. Fifty-seven Senators voted to override, but the 57 were 10 votes fewer than the two-thirds necessary and required to override.

Which brings me to where we are now and the reason I stand here to pay my respects to Senators like the distinguished occupant of the chair, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. SANTORUM, Mr. SMITH, and others. The Senate has been considering whether an innocent baby—partially born, just 3 inches from the protection of the law—deserves the right to live, to love, and to be loved. Interestingly enough, the House of Representatives has already passed H.R. 1122, which is the bill now before the Senate. In my judgment, the Senate must not squander this opportunity to outlaw partial-birth abortions, and I cannot believe it will.

Those who oppose the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, as it is named, have again asserted the necessity of the procedure that enables doctors to deliver babies partially, feet first from the womb, only to have their brains brutally removed by the doctor's instruments. This procedure has prompted revulsion across this land, even among many who previously have been vocal advocates of the right to choose.

Well-known medical doctors, obstetricians and gynecologists have repeatedly rejected the assertions that a partial-birth abortion is needed to protect the health of a woman in a late-term complicated pregnancy. Dr. Pamela E. Smith, who is director of medical education in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Chicago's Mount Sinai Hospital, in a letter to Senators described these assertions as—in her words, not mine—“deceptive and patently untrue.”

Also, Mr. President, there is much to be said about the facts surrounding the number of partial-birth abortions performed annually and the reason they are performed—or at least the given, stated reason. It is hard to overlook the recent confession of Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, who admitted that he, himself, had deceived the American people on national television about the number and the nature of partial-birth abortions.

Mr. Fitzsimmons now estimates that up to 5,000 partial-birth abortions are conducted annually on healthy women carrying healthy babies. This is a far cry from the rhetoric espoused by Washington's pro-abortion groups who maintain that only 500 partial-birth abortions are performed every year, and only in extreme medical circumstances.

Mr. President, I could go on and on, but Senators throughout this debate have provided ample evidence affirming the need to rid America of this senseless, brutal form of killing. And it is also important to note that the American people recognize the moral significance of this legislation. The continued outpouring of letters and phone calls from across the country in support of a ban on partial-birth abortions has been nothing short of remarkable.

I remember so vividly the day in January 1973, when the Supreme Court

handed down the decision to legalize abortion. It was hard to find many people to speak up, certainly on the floor of the Senate, on behalf of unborn babies.

But it is time, once again, for Members of the Senate to stand up and be counted for or against the most helpless human beings imaginable, for or against the destruction of innocent human life in such a repugnant way. The Senate simply must pass the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, and I pray that it will do it by a margin of at least 67 votes in favor of the ban.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business Friday, May 16, 1997, the Federal debt stood at \$5,343,648,869,296.26. (Five trillion, three hundred forty-three billion, six hundred forty-eight million, eight hundred sixty-nine thousand, two hundred ninety-six dollars, and twenty-six cents)

One year ago, May 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,113,663,000,000. (Five trillion, one hundred thirteen billion, six hundred sixty-three million)

Twenty-five years ago, May 1972, the Federal debt stood at \$427,214,000,000 (Four hundred twenty-seven billion, two hundred fourteen million) which reflects a debt increase of nearly \$5 trillion—\$4,916,434,869,296.26 (Four trillion, nine hundred sixteen billion, four hundred thirty-four million, eight hundred sixty-nine thousand, two hundred ninety-six dollars, and twenty-six cents) during the past 25 years.

THE RAPID CITY FIRE OF 1997

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, last week a fire devastated downtown Rapid City, consuming the historic Sweeney Building in a furious blaze that threatened to destroy the entire block. Only the heroic efforts of the Rapid City Fire Department and emergency workers from all over the county ensured that the damage, as severe as it was, was contained.

This terrible blaze took a much-loved part of our heritage from us. The Sweeney Building had towered over Rapid City for 111 years, and was one of the oldest buildings in the Black Hills. Its builder, Tom Sweeney, was legendary. His name and slogan “Tom Sweeney Wants to See You” were famous throughout the hills, and his showmanship put Buffalo Bill to shame. His store was full of everything from gold pans to wagons for the early pioneers, and it was said that he could—and did—sell anything. Tom's store is gone now, and it will be missed.

Although part of our past, the Sweeney Building also was a vibrant part of our present. Seven businesses located in the building were lost in the Rapid City fire. They ranged from the State Barbershop, where Vern Johnson cut hair for 37 years, to the 1-week-old Blue Moon nightclub. No one is yet