

## This fight cynical, quixotic

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By: **Catherine McMullen** , Forum

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Our new state motto might well become: "North Dakota: Just as backward as South Dakota, only colder."

Some North Dakota legislators are bright people; others – not so much. But I don't believe for a minute that any of them, including the owner of a sanitation business in Minot, has the divine wisdom to know when life begins.

Nonetheless, the House on Tuesday approved, 51-41, a bill that defines a fertilized egg as a human being. The bill now goes to the Senate, where it stands a slimmer chance of passage.

House Bill 1572 was sponsored by a Republican Roman Catholic male (is anyone surprised?), Dan Ruby of Minot, who said he's gunning for a fight on the bill's constitutionality with the support of anti-choice groups. Ruby said the bill defines human life because the Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion instructs states "that in order to challenge, we have to stipulate when life begins." One wonders if Ruby represents the people of Minot or the groups behind the bill.

Ruby's announced aim is to pick a fight – poor reason for legislation – and this bill is quixotic, cynical, poorly crafted and potentially expensive. Quixotic in that the U.S. Supreme Court has ignored any number of similarly-intended efforts; why Ruby thinks this one will get the court's attention in the remote chance it survives lower court challenges is anyone's guess.

The bill is cynical in that it does not call outright for a ban on abortions and because the language is deceptively benign. It is poorly crafted; according to Planned Parenthood, its "a fertilized-egg-is-a-person" logic could outlaw contraception and medical procedures to treat

ectopic pregnancies and infertility. And if passed, the legislation could cost the state \$5 million to \$8 million to defend in court.

It's time – quickly, firmly and loudly – to object to this extreme and embarrassing effort of the Legislature to dictate morality and interfere with reproductive options:

- Write, call or e-mail your district's senator – and those from other districts. Inundate their inboxes with messages. Make them answer to you. Citizen input has more effect than one might guess. Legislators' addresses and phone numbers can be found at [www.legis.nd.gov](http://www.legis.nd.gov); click on "legislative districts" to find links to your senators.
- Copy those e-mails to your representatives, especially those who voted for the bill. And remember who they are next election.
- Write to Gov. John Hoeven urging his veto in the event that the legislation is approved by the Senate. His e-mail is [governor@nd.gov](mailto:governor@nd.gov), and his phone number is (701) 328-2200.
- Get on the phone, on Facebook, and on e-mail; urge friends and acquaintances to apply similar pressure.

Those of us who care about medical, privacy and reproductive rights can't sit this one out and merely roll our eyes at the arrogant foolishness of the North Dakota Legislature. Too much is at stake, and these "representatives" deserve a good public thumping.

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McMullen is an English professor at Concordia College.

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