

# Michigan Senate Talks Abortion

Marlene Tyre

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Abortion is the current controversy in the Michigan Senate.

Senator John E. McCauley, Wyandotte Democrat is sponsor of a new abortion bill, and feels it could be passed, if released for discussion by the Judiciary Committee. The bill, somewhat limited in its scope, is nonetheless liberal in its attempt to revise the existing laws.

It would permit abortion in cases wherein it might be necessary for the preservation of the physical or mental health of the mother or where there would be substantial risk of physical or mental defects in the child. It would permit abortions in cases wherein the mother is thirteen years of age or younger, or in cases of rape and incest.

Also included with the abortion issue is the subject of sterilization which is now legal in Michigan. However this bill would serve to clarify the now vague legal liability of the performing doctor by establishing specific conditions under which such an operation could be performed. The bill has the approval of Michigan Public Health Director Dr. Albert E. Heustis, as well as the American Medical Association.

Abortion is estimated to be the cause of approximately one million U.S. deaths annually. Hemorrhage, infection and blood vessel accidents cause the greatest number of fatalities; numerous other women suffer life-long ill effects. Meanwhile the performing charlatans do a lucrative business. Abortion is a felony and carries a maximum penalty of four years. If it results in a death of a woman, it is termed manslaughter and can result in a fifteen year sentence.

Obviously the prime opposition to the bill lies with the power block of the Catholic hierarchy and population, which has been quite successful thus far in discouraging discussion and legislation on the issue.

In New York State such a bill died in the Senate after the bishops of eight dioceses issued a joint pastoral letter condemning any liberalization of abortion laws. The letter, read at all masses on a Sunday last February, stated, "We urge you most strongly to do all in your power to prevent direct attacks upon the lives of unborn children. We are by no means blind to the sufferings of mothers and to the problems confronting some families... but we insist that any solution must respect the life of the innocent, defenseless, unborn child."

In New Jersey the senate, with the backing of the Catholic governor, flatly refused to discuss the subject.

Hopefully Michigan women and Senator McCauley will have better luck.



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