



# Ultrasound

*Seeing is believing!*



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THE FAMILY FOUNDATION

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## **Current Law**

The Commonwealth of Virginia currently recognizes that pregnant women deserve the opportunity to review certain basic information before making a life-altering decision such as choosing abortion. Currently, women are offered 1) a full, reasonable and comprehensible medical explanation of the nature, benefits, risks of and alternatives to abortion, 2) an instruction that she may withdraw her consent at any time prior to abortion, 3) an opportunity to speak with the abortion doctor, 4) a statement of the probable gestational age of the fetus at the time the abortion is to be performed and 5) a pamphlet produced by the Department of Health that describes the development of an unborn child and provides adoption options. (Virginia Code § 18.2-76)

## **Updating Law**

Since Informed Consent first became law in 2001, technology has improved drastically. The Family Foundation supports legislation that updates our current Informed Consent law with modern technology by including as a component of the law the requirement that women receive an ultrasound and be permitted to view the results prior to undergoing an abortion. This update will protect the woman's health and give her the opportunity to make a truly *informed choice*.

## **Why Update the Law to Include an Ultrasound?**

Virginia's current Informed Consent law requires that someone guess at the probable gestational age of the unborn child.

## **Why is guessing bad?**

- Estimating the age of the fetus has resulted in botched abortions.  
**Requiring an ultrasound be done to determine the age of the fetus is a matter of protecting women.**
  - Public record of a Board of Medicine disciplinary hearing from March 8, 1999 documents an incident where an abortionist made a determination (or guess) of the gestational development of an unborn fetus and upon the commencement of the abortion, learned that the fetus, estimated to be eight weeks old was actually 26 weeks.
- **It is illegal to do an abortion in a clinic after thirteen weeks of age.**  
Therefore, guessing the gestational age, based on what a woman tells the doctor performing an abortion, could mean that doctors are violating the law (Virginia Code § 18.2-73) and putting women at serious risk.

## **Why Permit Women to See the Results?**

Virginia law already says that women have the right to know certain information before they can be presumed to have made an *informed choice*. Given modern technology, a woman should have the right to see what the exact status of the fetus is inside her womb before making a determination. Many women regret their abortions and feel that they were uninformed in the process. Some specifically regret the fact that they later learned that their child was already at the age where it would have had a heartbeat and limbs forming. Why do we give a woman a guess and a pamphlet with drawings instead of giving her specific information about her child?