

Editorials

Vote NO on Proposition 4

Draconian aspects of parental notification requirement could put minors at greater risk for injury or death.

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This is the third time in four years California voters have been asked to place a "notification hurdle" in the way of minor women obtaining an abortion.

Twice California voters have said NO. They should do so again.

Proposition 4 referred to by proponents as "Sarah's Law" would require the parents or guardians of "unemancipated minors," or unmarried women under 18 years of age, to be given 48-hour notification before an abortion is performed.

If the woman fears having her parents or guardians notified, she can ask a judge to waive the notification requirement or ask that an alternate adult be notified instead.

But for an alternate adult to be notified, the minor must claim she is being abused sexually, physically or emotionally. Her report is sent to law enforcement and Child Protective Services.

Likely a young woman who fears retaliation would reject the notion of provoking a criminal investigation of her family to obtain an abortion.

Abortion rights advocates report most minors are accompanied to clinics by family members — mothers, sisters, aunts, etc. In rare cases, a young woman may fear having her family learn she is pregnant.

Opponents of Proposition 4 believe the reporting requirements will prompt young women to seek abortions out of state or from unlicensed practitioners, or delay procedures resulting in higher-risk, late-term abortions.

Proposition 4 is a law looking for a problem to solve. Proponents claim their intent is to protect young women from the risks of dangerous medical procedures and from having coerced abortions. But they are unable to cite statistics as to how many minor women are forced to have abortions, or are injured or killed as a result.

In fact, proponents had to stretch to find a case to cite in their ballot argument. Sarah, the initiative's namesake, doesn't exist. The case proponents cite is really about 15-year-old Jammie Garcia Yanez-Villegas, who died in Texas in 1994 of a post-abortion infection.

Proposition 4 would not have applied to Jammie because she was in a common-law marriage recognized by Texas and was an "emancipated" minor.

Parents want to protect their children. The majority would want to be consulted before any medical procedure, including whether an abortion is performed. Daughters turn to good parents in time of crisis for advice and support. But in some families, relationships are strained and children fear parents.

In 1953, a state law was enacted that allowed minors to receive, without parental consent or notification, care for a pregnancy, including an abortion. A subsequent law passed in 1987 seeking to restrict this access was never enacted and eventually thrown out by the courts.

More than 30 states require some form of notification. But in California, notification proponents have either overreached in their efforts or have not made their case to voters.

Again, this year's attempt falls short and should be rejected.

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