

VIEWPOINTS

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

The secret the IVF industry doesn't want you to know

By Norman Woods



The in-vitro fertilization (IVF) industry has a heartwarming story to tell you. They will introduce you to their growing community of loving couples who wish to become parents, and show you pictures of the smiling faces who were born because of IVF practices. But this is only part of the story – a small part. The reason that the IVF industry has attacked the recent Alabama ruling – *LePage v. Center for Reproductive Medicine* – is because they are hiding something, and they are afraid people will learn the rest of the story.

The process of IVF includes the harvesting of sperm and egg from the intended mother and father, fertilizing the egg in vitro – “in the glass,” and then implanting the embryo into the mother’s womb. In this process there are many ethical questions that need to be answered, but right now we will focus on just one aspect, and it’s the part the industry doesn’t want you to know about: they never create just one embryo – they create an excess amount. Many of them end up frozen or discarded completely.

Let me tell you about a friend of mine. She and her husband were having trouble conceiving and went to visit an IVF clinic. The doctor discussed the options with them, explained the process, and they began to make a tentative plan. The discussion went well until the doctor explained that multiple embryos would be created. The couple explained that they only wanted one baby at a time and requested the doctor only fertilize one embryo at a time. The response was shocking – the doctor made them feel as though they were unintelligent or unreasonable. He explained that they always create a group of embryos because it is significantly cheaper that way.

The doctor said the quiet part out loud. He admitted that the industry regularly creates excess embryos for cost savings. These excess embryos, stored in a freezer (now totaling over 1 million in the United States), are the true subject of the Alabama ruling. The court, when asked whether these embryos have any rights on their own, said yes – and ruled that embryos can’t be discarded as if they were merely lumps of tissue.

In the wake of the ruling, we have heard many voices claiming that IVF

has been targeted by the court and that the industry is at risk of shutting down. Here’s the truth: the IVF industry is “at risk” of being legally required to treat embryos with dignity. That’s it.

The intense backlash against the Alabama ruling tells you everything you need to know about the industry: they don’t believe embryos are human. They don’t want to be burdened with the requirement of recognizing that embryos have some form of legal rights. They would rather shut down all together – and some already have.

The Alabama Supreme Court didn’t break new ground. If we look to Louisiana, we see their legislature conferring “juridical personhood” on embryos and requiring that any action taken with them must reflect embryos’ “best interest.” The Tennessee Supreme Court took a hybrid stance of sorts, asserting that embryos are not equivalent to persons, but are also not property.

The IVF industry is scrambling to cover their tracks and use loving families with genuinely good intentions to do it. Don’t be fooled by their bait-and-switch. They should be, at bare minimum, required to treat these hu-

man embryos with dignity and respect.

One final note, as we bring this issue home. Back in 2021, the South Dakota Legislature debated House Bill 1248, which would have required that if a clinic or other establishment destroys embryos, they must report how many embryos they destroy. This simple requirement was met with a firestorm of voices asking, “Why do you want to know?” Go back and listen to the floor debate, listen to the committee hearings. You will be shocked at what you find. One lobbyist, speaking for the state’s largest hospital system, expressed concern over the cost of such a report, and said that knowing how many human embryos are destroyed is not “medically or scientifically significant” information. He further claimed that it would be “medically useless” to keep track of how many embryos were destroyed.

“Why do we want to know?”

Because the Alabama Supreme Court got it right – human embryos must be afforded protection under our laws. Don’t be fooled by their cover-up. Follow the money, it points to the truth every time.

Norman Woods is the Director of South Dakota Family Voice.