



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Loudon Joins with Midwifery Advocates to Support Reform

Senate and House legislation legalizes the practice of midwifery

JEFFERSON CITY – Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, today joined with grassroots advocates and Rep. Charles Portwood, R-Ballwin, to introduce Missouri legislation legalizing midwifery, the art of assisting a woman through childbirth.

“Current law discriminating against midwives fails to recognize their important, historic role in childbearing,” Loudon said. “Certified professionals should not be prohibited from providing a valuable service to mothers and infants.”

Senate Bill 303 and House Bill 503 legalize the practice of midwifery in Missouri. The bills establish a board for licensing Certified Professional Midwives (CPM). The CPM credential is recognized internationally and in approximately half of the United States.

The grassroots advocates include fathers, mothers, little children, teens and college students, nurses, farmers, professors, blue-collar workers, attorneys, the Amish, Democrats and Republicans. Visitors will bring homemade cookies to their legislators.

One advocate, Mary Ueland, executive director of the Show-Me Freedom in Healthcare Committee, is making the legalization of direct-entry midwives her main focus for 2007.

“People move here from states such as Florida, Texas and Tennessee and wonder why they can’t find a midwife in the Yellow Pages like they did in their home state,” Ueland said. “Then someone tells them that in Missouri it’s a felony to practice midwifery, and they’ll have to cross state lines or have their baby without professional assistance if they want to choose a homebirth.”

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“Outlawing midwifery puts well-informed people who have educated themselves on the benefits and risks of homebirth in a ridiculous situation,” Ueland continued. “Do they go it alone, hire an illegal midwife who could go to prison for simply attending their birth, or travel to another state? Missouri is one of the few remaining states where midwifery is illegal. We are asking the Legislature to catch up to the national trends and allow Missourians the midwifery option.”

Debbie Smithey, president of Missouri Midwives Association, is another strong advocate of midwife rights.

“This is about assuring that Missouri families will have a professional, trained midwife who can attend their birth without fear of legal consequences,” Smithey said. “Pregnancy and birth is a natural life process, not an illness or disease. The practice of midwifery is separate and distinct from the practice of medicine and should not be included in the definition of the practice of medicine in Missouri law.”

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