

Darla and Peter Barar, Olivia Barar
Texas
Sen. Ted Cruz Sen. John Cornyn

Roe vs. Wade did not have a major effect on our lives until June 10, 2016. We struggled to get pregnant, but after traveling 11,000 miles round-trip to the Czech Republic, we were eventually successful using donor eggs. We were thrilled to be expecting twin girls, due in October of 2016.

But at our 20-week routine anatomy scan on June 10, 2016, we received some of the most devastating news expectant parents could possibly receive. While Baby A, our beautiful Olivia Adele, was perfectly healthy, Baby B, our Catherine Sophia, was very ill.

Our obstetrician laid out an array of developmental issues: an encephalocele (a dangerous neural tube defect), a small head size (about two weeks behind), signs of possible ventriculomegaly (enlarged ventricles in the brain), a large cleft lip and palate, and possible fused digits. Individually, most of these aren't major issues, but our doctor had never seen this combination before, and it indicated problems on the genetic level.

We were referred immediately to a high-risk Maternal Fetal Medicine doctor, who we saw the following Monday. He confirmed all of our OB's findings, noted her head was not growing, and said her cleft was making it impossible for Catherine to regulate the size of her amniotic sac, which meant that Olivia's sac was being restricted. Both of our daughters were in danger.

Our MFM referred us to his mentor in Houston, who saw us on a Saturday and spent four hours imaging our little girls. He classified her small head size as microcephaly and said that her encephalocele was open, which meant her brain was slowly being pulled out of her head and into the cyst on the back of her skull. She would surely experience severe brain damage if she lived long past delivery. But none of our doctors thought she would make it more than a few days at most if she survived delivery at all.

After much counseling from all of our doctors and doing a lot of soul searching as a couple, we made the heartbreaking decision to end Catherine's suffering. At 21 weeks and 6 days, we had a termination procedure performed. Her heart was stopped with an injection of potassium chloride. She went peacefully knowing that she was loved and hearing my heart beat for her and her sister.

This decision was not one we made lightly. We didn't just throw our hands up at the first sign of trouble and decide to abort. Our hearts will always be heavy with the decision to end Catherine's life.

Having the ability to make this decision ourselves, without government interference, was so important. It is such a personal decision, and the burden is already nearly impossible to bear. No one should impose further burden on families by taking away the ability to do what is best for their children, even in the womb.