1849 Wisconsin Criminal Abortion Statute

940.04 Abortion.

(1) Any person, other than the mother, who intentionally destroys the life of an unborn child is guilty of a Class H felony.

(2) Any person, other than the mother, who does either of the following is guilty of a Class E felony:

(a) Intentionally destroys the life of an unborn quick child; or

(b) Causes the death of the mother by an act done with intent to destroy the life of an unborn child. It is unnecessary to prove that the fetus was alive when the act so causing the mother's death was committed.

(5) This section does not apply to a therapeutic abortion which:

(a) Is performed by a physician; and

(b) Is necessary, or is advised by 2 other physicians as necessary, to save the life of the mother; and

(c) Unless an emergency prevents, is performed in a licensed maternity hospital.

(6) In this section “unborn child" means a human being from the time of conception until it is born alive.

History: 2001 a. 109; 2011 a. 217.

Aborting a child against a father's wishes does not constitute intentional infliction of emotional distress. Przybyla v. Przybyla, 87 Wis. 2d 441, 275 N.W.2d 112 (Ct. App. 1978).

Sub. (2) (a) proscribes feticide. It does not apply to consensual abortions. It was not impliedly repealed by the adoption of s. 940.15 in response to Roe v. Wade. State v. Black, 188 Wis. 2d 639, 526 N.W.2d 132 (1994).

The common law “year-and-a-day rule" that no homicide is committed unless the victim dies within a year and a day after the injury is inflicted is abrogated, with prospective application only. State v. Picotte, 2003 WI 42, 261 Wis. 2d 249, 661 N.W.2d 381, 01-3063.

This section is cited as similar to a Texas statute that was held to violate the due process clause of the 14th amendment, which protects against state action the right to privacy, including a woman's qualified right to terminate her pregnancy. Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

The state may prohibit first trimester abortions by nonphysicians. Connecticut v. Menillo, 423 U.S. 9 (1975).

The viability of an unborn child is discussed. Colautti v. Franklin, 439 U.S. 379 (1979).

Poverty is not a constitutionally suspect classification. Encouraging childbirth except in the most urgent circumstances is rationally related to the legitimate governmental objective of protecting potential life. Harris v. McRae, 448 U.S. 297 (1980).

Abortion issues are discussed. Akron v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health, 462 U.S. 416 (1983); Planned Parenthood Assn. v. Ashcroft, 462 U.S. 476 (1983); Simopoulas v. Virginia, 462 U.S. 506 (1983).

The essential holding of Roe v. Wade allowing abortion is upheld, but various state restrictions on abortion are permissible. Planned Parenthood v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833, 120 L. Ed. 2d 674 (1992).

Wisconsin's abortion statute, s. 940.04, Stats. 1969, is unconstitutional as applied to the abortion of an embryo that has not quickened. Babbitz v. McCann, 310 F. Supp. 293 (1970).

When U.S. supreme court decisions clearly made Wisconsin's antiabortion statute unenforceable, the issue in a physician's action for injunctive relief against enforcement became mooted, and it no longer presented a case or controversy over which the court could have jurisdiction. Larkin v. McCann, 368 F. Supp. 1352 (1974).