

## Deadly substitute

Abortionists use lethal injections as an end run on partial-birth abortion ban | *Lynde Langdon*

In the wake of the new nationwide ban on partial-birth abortion, abortionists are using lethal injections as an alternative to sucking out the brains of half-born babies. The Supreme Court criminalized the latter when they upheld the ban last April. The law, passed by Congress in 2003, prohibits an abortion in which any part of the baby above the navel is delivered before it is killed and called the procedure "gruesome and inhumane."

To stay within the ban's limits, abortionists are reportedly using in utero lethal injections to kill babies before delivery. Most notably, three hospitals affiliated with the Harvard Medical School – Massachusetts General, Brigham and Women's, and Beth Israel Deaconess – have made the shots standard procedure for abortions around the 20th week, according to the Boston Globe. Doctors at those hospitals administer doses of one of two drugs to the fetus to stop its heart. The first, digoxin, is routinely given to adults to slow down or control irregular heart rates. The second, potassium chloride, can replenish potassium in the body, but some states use it in death-penalty executions because high doses of it are lethal.

Lethal-injection abortions increase the risk of harm to the mother and promote "off-label" uses of prescription medicine. But the most frustrating aspect of the new abortion practice is the loophole it has exposed in the partial-birth abortion ban.

Some pro-life organizations, including the American Life League and Human Life International, warned of the loophole and published ads attacking the ban after the Supreme Court decision. Those ads called the ban a "partial-birth abortion manual." Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in the majority opinion on the decision: "If the intact D&E procedure is truly necessary in some circumstances, it appears likely an injection that kills the fetus is an alternative under the Act that allows the doctor to perform the procedure." If that is where late-term abortions are heading, then the ban's effect could be to eliminate one gruesome and inhumane procedure and replace it with another.