

# News in brief from around the State House for Feb. 23

*Fri, Feb 23, 2007*

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Pregnant women seeking an abortion in South Carolina would be required to first look at ultrasound images of their fetus under legislation that advanced Thursday to a House committee.

Proponents hope the bill will lead to fewer abortions, with more women opting for adoption or keeping their child. Abortion rights activists have criticized the measure, but no one testified against it Thursday.

Rep. Mick Mulvaney, a co-sponsor and father of triplets, said the latest technology makes it harder for people to argue a fetus isn't a life.

Carla Harvey, a volunteer at Lowcountry Crisis Pregnancy Center in Charleston, said most pregnant women who have an ultrasound at the center change their minds about having an abortion.

"In ultrasounds, a baby at eight weeks will jump on the screen and suck their thumbs," said Harvey, a registered nurse who regrets an abortion she had at age 18.

"A lot of times, a maternal bond is made when they can see that baby. I didn't have that luxury," she said.

A similar bill has been introduced in the Senate.

Last year, Michigan and Oklahoma passed laws giving a woman the option of viewing her unborn baby by ultrasound before an abortion.

COLUMBIA — The Ten Commandments could be posted in public buildings with other historical documents under a proposal advancing to a House committee.

Rep. Mac Toole said it's time for the General Assembly to take a stand and allow references to God in public monuments and displays.

"We all recognize faith does matter to basically everybody. This country was founded on religious faith," said Toole, R-West Columbia. "We need to deal with it in a way the vast majority of people in South Carolina desire us to." Kowtowing to the few, he said, "shows a sign of weakness."

A House panel approved the bill after amending it to allow the Ten Commandments and the motto "In God We Trust" to be posted among an 11-document display. Others include the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The amended bill is modeled after a Georgia law and should pass constitutional questions, said Oran Smith, president of the Palmetto Family Council.

COLUMBIA — Legislation sponsors hope will curtail shaken baby syndrome in South Carolina advanced Thursday to a Senate committee.

Under the bill, parents of any child born in a South Carolina hospital would view an 8-minute video on the dangers of shaking infants and how to cope with persistent crying. Hospitals would cover the cost of the videos. Also, child care providers statewide could buy the video.

"Pennies of prevention could be worth millions of dollars in a cure," said Heather Yeh, president-elect of the South Carolina Medical Association Alliance.

The Aiken nurse said she'll never forget a 4-month-old victim she treated 12 years ago who was shaken so badly she could not suck or grasp a finger. "It's tragic that something that lasted only a few seconds robbed her of her entire future," Yeh said.