

For Immediate Release  
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## Pro-Life Powerhouses Rally Around Controversial Embryo-Death Suit

### **Organizations Show Legal Support as New Briefs Are Filed in Wrongful Death Case Against Chicago Fertility Clinic**

Chicago—On Friday, briefs were filed in the Illinois Appellate Court over the wrongful death of frozen embryos at an in vitro fertilization clinic, the Center for Human Reproduction (CHR) in Chicago. With major reproductive rights issues at stake, nine national and Illinois based pro-life and pro-family organizations including Concerned Women for America, Illinois Citizens for Life and the Catholic Conference of Illinois filed an *amici curiae* or “friends of the court” brief. The Chicago-based Thomas More Society, which represents the Coalition, has been involved in several high-profile cases of this nature. Thomas More Society brings added legal expertise to a potentially volatile issue, with sweeping ramifications for reproductive technology and stem-cell research.

In 2005, Cook County Circuit Judge Jeffrey Lawrence made international headlines by refusing to dismiss a wrongful death lawsuit by Alison Miller and Todd Parrish against the CHR, which had mistakenly destroyed the couple’s embryos in January of 2000. In his ruling, Lawrence cited the 1980 Wrongful Death Act, which allows for lawsuits to be filed if unborn fetuses are killed in an accident or assault, regardless of their “state of gestation or development.”

Defending his own decision, Judge Lawrence argued that “a claim lies for wrongful destruction [of the embryo] whether or not it is implanted in its mother’s womb...philosophers and theologians may debate, but there is no doubt in the mind of the Illinois Legislature when life begins. It begins at conception.”

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The ACLU has maintained that Lawrence’s allowance for wrongful death is “not medically accurate.” However, the pro-life Coalition defended the Judge’s decision stating that, “The Illinois General Assembly’s definition of conception...is accurate according to traditional and contemporary medical usage.

Thomas Brejcha, President and Chief Counsel of the Thomas More Society stated, “The crucial question is whether the pre-implanted embryo is a human being or personal property. This case is the modern equivalent to *Dred Scott* in a Petri dish. We are in full agreement with Judge Lawrence that human life begins at conception and should be protected.” The Coalition includes: Illinois Citizens for Life, Illinois Federation for Right to Life, The Illinois Right to Life Committee, The Illinois Family Institute, Concerned Women for America, Life Advocacy Resource Project, Concerned Christian Americans, Lutherans for Life, Inc., and the Catholic Conference of Illinois. The principal author of the Society’s brief was Special Counsel Paul Linton.

**A COMPLETE COPY OF THE PETITION IS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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**About The Thomas More Society**

The Thomas More Society is a non-profit, public interest law firm based in Chicago, Illinois. It was founded in 1997 to meet the burgeoning legal needs of the pro-life movement. The Thomas More Society provides legal advice and assistance to those who face harassment, employment discrimination, unjust treatment, civil litigation or criminal prosecution as a result of their pro-life views or their peaceful protest activities. In the last three years, Thomas More Society has scored two decisive victories before the U.S. Supreme Court in representing the named petitioners in the marathon, nationwide federal class action involving use of the federal racketeering (RICO), extortion and antitrust law against abortion protesters (*Scheidler v. NOW*, 537 U.S. 393, 411 (2003), and *Scheidler v. NOW*, 125 S.Ct. 2991 (2006)). In addition, the Society has filed numerous 'friend of the Court' briefs in the Supreme Court. More recently, the Society submitted a brief for an Illinois pro-life coalition successfully urging the Illinois Supreme Court to issue procedural rules to allow implementation of Illinois’ parental notification law of 1995.