

Durbin Joins Senate Democrats On The Floor To Call For Passage Of Veterans Families Health Services Act, Protection For IVF

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today joined his Democratic colleagues in speaking in support of the *Veterans Families Health Services Act*, which Durbin cosponsored, ahead of U.S. Senator Patty Murray’s (D-WA) request to pass the bill by unanimous consent. Despite the importance of providing accessible health care to female veterans and claims that Republicans support IVF, U.S. Senator James Lankford (R-OK) objected to the passage of the bill.

Durbin began his remarks by noting the sacrifice of female service members, who now make up 17 percent of the nation's active duty military.

"We all know it is Women's History Month. And though this work should be done year-round, during March especially, we should focus on policies that improve the lives of women in America, including the lives of women veterans," Durbin began. "As our Armed Forces better reflect the diversity of America, that means that our support systems and resources for veterans must also meet the needs of that population. And one of those resources must be supporting our veterans and service members when they want to start a family."

Durbin highlighted the importance of passing the *Veterans Families Health Services Act*, which would expand fertility treatments and family-building services that are covered under service members' and veterans' health care plans.

"Those who serve our nation are at an elevated risk for injury. That is part of the reason we owe them such a debt of gratitude. They do risk life and limb to protect America. But when service members are injured in the line of duty, one consequence can be obstacles to conceiving children," said Durbin. "That's why we should pass the *Veteran Families Health Services Act* immediately... This includes services across the board to safeguard future fertility, adoption assistance, and in vitro fertilization."

Durbin spoke about the dangerous outcomes of Alabama's recent state Supreme Court ruling that frozen embryos created during the IVF process are "children" under a state wrongful death law. As a result of the ruling, access to IVF has been threatened.

"Access to IVF recently came into the national spotlight when the Alabama Supreme Court ruled last month that frozen embryos are 'children' and that their destruction can be treated like the wrongful death of a child. That decision by the Alabama Supreme Court had major consequences on reproductive rights in Alabama, as major health care providers stopped IVF procedures out of fear of civil and criminal liability," Durbin said.

Durbin called out his Republican colleagues for their hypocritical views on IVF access, pointing out that Republicans are now supposedly supportive of access to IVF treatment, despite their cosponsorship of legislation that turns its back on the common fertility treatment. Durbin reminded his colleagues that U.S. Senator Duckworth attempted to pass the *Access to Family Building Act* to protect IVF just last month, but the legislation was blocked by U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), who falsely [claimed](#) that the legislation would lead to "human cloning" and stated that "surrogacy is too extreme."

"Not surprisingly, Republicans across the country are scrambling, fearing that such an unpopular restriction on reproductive rights could hurt their electoral chances in the next

election. In the weeks since the ruling, Republicans have claimed to support access to IVF, and yet, many also support so called ‘fetal personhood’ bills that would codify that life begins at conception and lack carveouts to protect access to IVF,” Durbin continued. “You can’t have it both ways.”

“When Senator Duckworth, my Illinois colleague – a veteran herself who relied on IVF to start her family – came to this floor of this United States Senate and asked for unanimous consent to pass a bill that would have established federal protections for access to IVF and other fertility treatments, a Republican Senator blocked it,” Durbin said.

“If the Republicans are truly pro-family, truly pro-military as they claim to be, then there should be no hesitation in supporting this bill that supports our service members and veterans who want to start a family,” Durbin continued.

Durbin concluded his remarks by emphasizing that military service should not restrict Americans from having a child through IVF.

“Let me make one thing clear – no one should have to choose between serving our nation and having a child. We should be expanding these serves, not restricting them. Our service members sacrifice much to keep our families safe. The least we can do is make sure they have the full range of care options they need to start families of their own,” Durbin concluded.

Video of Durbin’s remarks on the floor is available [here](#).

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