

CENSORING PROLIFE SPEECH IN SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco's Board of Supervisors has voted to curtail the free-speech rights of prolife protesters.

Previously, before the police could cite demonstrators for harassment, women seeking an abortion had to inform protesters to cease their expression; alternatively, women had to instruct them that they want to be left alone. Under the new law, the onus is on the protesters: they must first get the consent of women seeking an abortion before exercising their free-speech rights. Mayor Willie Brown signed the censorial legislation.

This is a textbook case of how extremists operate in the U.S. If they can't defeat their ideological adversaries in the court of public opinion, they reach for censorship. The idea that protesters must first obtain permission from those whom they seek to persuade is preposterous. That this is happening in San Francisco—home of violent pacifists—makes the story even more ironic.

Our response was to call the ACLU asking what they were going to do about it. After all, they are the champions of free speech for everyone from Nazis to child pornographers. But guess what? The ACLU has no interest in challenging this gag rule. That's because abortion rights mean infinitely more to the free speech crusaders than anything else.