

Texas Family Asks To End Life Support For Pregnant Woman; Fetus Abnormal
News

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FORT WORTH, Texas (AP) -- Attorneys for a Fort Worth-area family will ask a judge today to allow a pregnant, brain-dead Texas woman to be removed from life support, despite hospital opposition.



State District Judge R.H. Wallace will hear arguments as the husband of Marlise Munoz seeks to remove her from life support. Munoz remains connected to machines in John Peter Smith Hospital in Fort Worth.

Erick Munoz of Haltom City said his wife, a fellow paramedic, clearly stated to him before he found her unconscious on Nov. 26: If she ever fell into this condition, she was not to be kept alive.

Hospital officials, however, say they're bound by a state law that prohibits the withdrawal of treatment from a pregnant patient. Several experts interviewed by The Associated Press have said the hospital is misapplying the law.

The case has raised questions about end-of-life care and whether a pregnant woman who is considered legally and medically dead should be kept on life support for the sake of a fetus. It also has gripped the attention of groups on both sides of the abortion debate, with anti-abortion groups arguing Munoz's fetus deserves a chance to be born.

Munoz is carrying a fetus, now believed to be at about 22 weeks' gestation, that is "distinctly abnormal," attorneys for the woman's husband said in a statement Wednesday.

Heather King and Jessica Hall Janicek based their statement on medical records they received from the hospital.

"Even at this early stage, the lower extremities are deformed to the extent that the gender cannot be determined," King and Janicek said, also noting the fetus has fluid building up inside the skull and possibly has a heart problem.

Spokeswomen for the hospital and the Tarrant County District Attorney's office, which is representing the hospital in the lawsuit, declined to comment Wednesday.