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Washington Final

Washington and Baltimore: Mostly cloudy, afternoon sun. Highs mid 40's. Tonight, some clouds. Lows in 30's. Tomorrow, partly sunny and breezy. Highs low 40's. Details, page C31.

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ONE DOLLAR

Legality Wouldn't Protect Cloned Children

To the Editor:

Laurence H. Tribe has it wrong (Op-Ed, Dec. 5). It is not outlawing human cloning that would create a class of outcasts. It is failing to ban cloning as quickly as possible. Dr. Ian Wilmut was successful in only 1 of 277 tries at cloning sheep, and his failures included many with severe birth defects. Researchers are vowing to proceed with human cloning. Where is Mr. Tribe's concern for the resulting children, a potential class of outcasts born with abnormalities?

Mr. Tribe's central argument is that successfully cloned children will be psychologically harmed if the practice is banned. However, many experts fear for their mental health whether the practice is legal or not. Of concern are violations of a child's right to uniqueness and the haunting fear in a child that his future is predetermined.

Mr. Tribe's fear of an underground market for cloned children, similar to back-room abortions, is also specious. Black markets thrive when transaction times are short and few people are involved. Reproductive technologies leading to birth require many months or years and involve numerous people.

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Washington, Dec. 10, 1997

The writer is executive director of the International Center for Technology Assessment.