

March 6, 2009

Have you heard anything about FOCA lately? Someone asked me this just yesterday, because they felt like the issue had dropped off the radar screen. That's what happens when 33 MILLION postcards hit Washington D.C. along with the e-mail campaign that has to date totaled over 50,000. The impact has reached a new historic level, this being the largest response ever in the 16 year history of such endeavors.

It is not a time to let our voice fade off into the distance. In fact, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has launched a new campaign, using e-mail, to urge Congress to oppose the federal funding and promotion of abortion and to maintain the current policies that promote the dignity of each person from conception to a natural death. We have a link on our web-site to find your representatives and senators e-mail addresses: [www.stclouddiocese.org/omf](http://www.stclouddiocese.org/omf).

Where do their concerns lie when we address these e-mails? On a federal level, the short list includes:

- Opposition to the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA).
- The defunding of abstinence grants. While successful abstinence programs were cut, Title X money for birth control programs was increased to \$307 million.
- UNFPA. Last month, the House restored funding to the United Nations Population Fund, the UN group which supports China's forced abortion population control program. The measure, H.R. 1105, contains language that would restore the money President Bush withheld from the UNFPA because of its pro-abortion activities. The Senate is poised to debate this legislation as part of the omnibus spending bill possibly this week.
- HHS conscience clauses. The Obama administration is moving to rescind a federal regulation that implements longstanding federal statutes protecting conscience rights in the health care profession. The Administration says it will open a new 30-day comment period so Americans may voice their concerns. "We encourage participation in this process by all committed to the sanctity of human life, the freedom of conscience, and the ethical integrity of our healing professions," said Deirde McQuade, spokesperson for the USCCB.
- Healthcare Reform. There are many concerns over how the specifics of health care reform may affect both the unborn and the elderly.

On a state level, the short list includes:

- The Alternatives Grant Bill could be fully or partially defunded to balance the budget. This Grant helps Crisis Pregnancy Centers assist women during pregnancy.
- A FOCA type bill titled the "Reproductive Privacy Act." As would FOCA, this legislation could wipe out many laws such as parental consent and woman's right to know. The bill is SF 115 and HF 616.
- "Marriage & Family Protection Act" (SF 120 & HF 893) would make marriage "gender neutral," in other words, same-sex marriage would be legal in Minnesota.

Two positive bills in the Minnesota legislature have been introduced: Prohibition on Sex Selection Abortion (HF 1196 & SF 1073) and Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2009 (HF 1197).

Our vigilance in making our voice heard is key. Yet, this should always be in a spirit of prayer. The Feast of the Annunciation will be celebrated on Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. It would be a good time to organize a Living Rosary for the unborn. Need ideas, go to our web-site or call our office at (320) 252-4721.