

Associated Baptist Press

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Senate approves ban on late-term abortion

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Senate approved a measure May 20 to ban a late-term abortion procedure called "partial-birth abortion" but lacks the 67 votes needed to override an expected veto by President Clinton.

The Senate voted 64-36 to ban the procedure, known medically as intact dilation and extraction, except in cases where the procedure is needed to save the life of the mother and no other procedure would suffice.

Clinton has vowed to veto any ban that does not provide an exception for "serious health consequences" to the mother.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry said Clinton "feels very strongly about that exception that needs to be available."

Supporters of the "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 1997" received a boost a day before the vote when the American Medical Association voiced its support for the measure after three technical changes were made.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., outlaws the procedure, which it defines as occurring when a doctor "partially vaginally delivers a living fetus before killing the infant and completing the delivery."

Under the measure, doctors convicted of performing the procedure could face fines and up to two years in prison.

McCurry said lawmakers "tinkered" with the legislation to accommodate the concerns the AMA had with respect to doctors but "that's not the same thing as taking care of the concerns that the president has about the women."

Supporters of the ban say the procedure is never needed for the health of the mother. The AMA endorsement described the late-term abortion method as "a procedure we all agree is not good medicine."

But McCurry said Clinton "has very vivid personal stories from women who are absolutely certain otherwise, and that's more compelling to the president."

The National Right to Life Committee pledged to seek the additional votes necessary to sustain a presidential veto.

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Last year, Clinton vetoed an identical law after Congress refused to include a health exemption. Overriding a presidential veto requires a two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate. Last year, the House voted to override Clinton's veto while the Senate vote fell short, 51-47.

The House passed this year's bill by a veto-proof margin of 295-136 in March.

The Senate rejected May 16 an alternative proposal offered by Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota that would have banned all late-term abortions except when the woman's life or "grievous injury to her physical health" is at risk.

Opponents said the Daschle health exceptions would have allowed the abortions for almost any reason. The measure failed 64-36.

Opponents to the ban say pro-lifers view it as a first step toward outlawing all abortions.

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-- Bob Allen contributed to this story.

Mobile school 'sinned, chairman tells Alabama Baptist leaders

MOBILE, Ala. (ABP) -- The University of Mobile "has sinned as an institution," its board chairman said May 15, by violating an agreement with Alabama Baptists to pay back money spent on the school's controversial Nicaraguan branch.

Two days earlier, trustees of the 2,700-student university terminated President Michael Magnoli, who is being blamed for the school's troubled finances. Now those trustees will struggle with how to cut expenses by \$1 million a year in order to balance the university's \$25 million annual budget, a task which may require cutting current staff and programs.

In 1994, the Alabama Baptist State Convention, troubled by the university's Latin American venture, affirmed an agreement limiting spending on the Nicaragua campus to gifts given specifically for or generated by that branch. Another part of the agreement called on trustees to return to the Mobile campus about \$2.3 million used to launch the Nicaragua school.

Last year, the university reported that \$739,000 had been repaid.

But, according to a recent financial review by trustees, instead of returning that money to the Mobile campus, the university had actually spent an additional \$100,000 on the Nicaraguan branch. Financial records were altered to conceal the expenditures, trustees said.

Trustee chairman Robert Maxwell told the Alabama Baptist executive committee May 15 that the university had violated the 1994 agreement with the state convention. "The institution did this, and we are guilty," he said.

According to Walter Hovell, a trustee who was appointed as the school's financial officer after the president's termination, a total of \$995,000 had been improperly credited to the Latin American Branch campus, located in San Marcos, Nicaragua.

Rather than declining, as the report originally showed, Mobile investments in Nicaragua grew to \$2.4 million in 1996, Hovell said. Trustees expect by the end of the current fiscal year June 30 those investments will have grown to \$3.3 million, according to the Alabama Baptist newspaper.

Hovell said the financial review was conducted in April and May after Magnoli asked trustees to help solve what he termed a "cash-flow problem." The study found an operating deficit averaging \$800,000 a year and showed the university would need \$1.7 million to meet obligations through the end of June.

After a closed-door meeting May 13, a statement announcing Magnoli's "separation" was issued.

Magnoli, president of the school 13 years, blamed the school's financial crisis on cost overruns for new construction. "The top man always takes the blame, and that is what is happening here," he said.

He admitted he was unable to bring financial stability to the school but denied he had done anything wrong. "You do not pay someone what they [the trustees] are paying me if someone has done something wrong," he said, an apparent reference to the severance agreement negotiated with trustees.

Citing a confidentiality agreement, Maxwell declined to disclose the terms of Magnoli's severance but insisted it was less than what would have been paid were Magnoli allowed to finish the two years remaining in a five-year contract. Later, however, the value of the package was reported to be close to \$400,000, including cash, a car and insurance.

Magnoli, 50, said he planned to "take a little while to think about the future."

"I do not want another 9-to-5 job," he said, adding he will probably cultivate "side businesses" and accept consulting contracts which have been "kept on the periphery" because of his duties as president.

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-- The Alabama Baptist

'Chosen Women' gather in PK-like stadium event

By David Finnigan

PASADENA, Calif. (ABP) -- More than 15,000 women gathered in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif., for a May 16-17 "Chosen Women" stadium event modeled after the popular Promise Keepers men's movement.

Some said they found the evangelical women's gathering to be feminine without being feminist.

"We need to come together because we need to know that other people are going through the same things that we are," said Sheri Hill, a 50-year-old grandmother. "It takes time to balance and have your priorities straight." Hill is director of women's ministries at First Baptist Church in Colton, Calif., which had 15 women at the event.

"It's a bonding of women just like the men have the bonding of men," said Emily Nelson, a retired nurse from a non-denominational church.

Large numbers of black, white and Asian-American women filled most of one side of the 90,000-seat Rose Bowl. Organizers estimate between 15,000 and 20,000 women attended this first Chosen Women event, sponsored by the non-denominational Women of Honor Christian Ministry in Orange County, Calif.

A cleaning woman flew in from Honolulu to be there, joining others from as far as Kansas and Oregon.

Both the wife and daughter of evangelist Billy Graham were on hand -- mom by video, daughter by video and in person. Their presence mirrored the wide age range represented by mothers, granddaughters and teen girls attending the Friday night and all-day Saturday, women-only gathering.

Chosen Women is not affiliated with the Promise Keepers, which has repeatedly been asked when it was going to branch out to women. Many women at this event said their husbands attend Promise Keepers rallies. But the Chosen Women program has no parallel to the Promise Keepers' seven promises. Many women who are single or whose spouses don't go to Promise Keepers said this event was meaningful for them too.

Organizers of the Rose Bowl event by, for and about Christian women did study and replicate some of Promise Keepers' organizing successes, like the 14,000 boxed meals. Chosen Women organizers have not decided if they will have another stadium gathering but said they were thrilled with this first turnout.

It was a time, those attending said, for Christian women to focus on being both Christians and women, with a distinct emphasis on the concept of "submission" before both God and a household-leading husband.

"We have submission, but it's willing submission," said Julie Park, a 22-year-old pre-med student at UCLA and one of a dozen young Korean-American women who came from Wilshire United Methodist Church in Los Angeles.

"It's not a dictatorship either. As much respect as we have for our husbands, they have for us. That's the key element," said Dina Neufeld, also 22 and a mom and waitress from the small California farm town of Wasco. The First Congregational Church there sent 30 women, all wearing bright shirts with the classic yellow "Have a nice day" happy face. Only their shirts said "Have a nice eternity."

The concept of submitting was clear from speakers and apparently undisputed by those hearing and cheering them. On Saturday, women in the Rose Bowl were asked to take out a handkerchief and wave it as a symbol of their "surrender" to God and the Christian concept of men leading the family.

Chosen Women founder Susan Kimes, also known for starting NEWIM (Network of Evangelical Women In Ministry) told the crowd they must think of themselves as "princesses and daughters of the King of Kings We accept our job description to be a servant." She also decried, "sexual immorality, divorce, substance and family abuse, abortion" and described Christians as, "a complaining, divided people."

"We are not known as your [God's] servants," she said. "Instead of seeing you in our brothers and sisters, we choose to separate and worship in separate houses. We've missed the blessing that comes from learning from one another."

Feminist critics of the male-only Promise Keepers may have a harder time finding fault with this women-run event. Many at Chosen Women handily dismissed feminist handwringing over their choice to "submit" to a wife/servant role, saying such critics don't understand the joy in such a fidelity-driven relationship. "There has to be some sort of hierarchy in the home," said one woman.

Betsy Kelly, 26, single and attending a community church in L.A.'s fashionable hamlet of Santa Monica, said feminist critics "don't understand why we come together and we want to relate with women who are on the same plane that we are, instead of being out doing everything that's very worldly. They just don't understand. Instead of being catty and fighting, we need to unite together and help people that don't know Jesus"

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Promise Keepers, Chosen Women, similar, yet have distinctions

PASADENA, Calif. (ABP) -- Though not connected, Promise Keepers and Chosen Women are events that are similar -- both stadium-based rallies for God. But there are clear distinctions between the two:

-- Volunteers for both Promise Keepers and Chosen Women wear uniforms of khaki pants, golf shirts and baseball caps. But while Promise Keepers use military-style block letters in their graphics, Chosen Women have opted for a more gentle, flowing script.

-- While men attending Promise Keepers like baseball caps, many of those at Chosen Women opted for straw hats. The stadium stage sported very long lavender and white drapes and green, large plants.

-- The Chosen Women product tent was laid out exactly like a Promise Keepers product tent -- clothes on outer tables, books and tapes on center tables. But Chosen Women's had purple streamers, ivy, French doors and arched windows. "We did a little extra to make sure women felt at home," said Chosen Women spokeswoman Joanne Herdrich.

-- Men at Promise Keepers rallies often stand and join in cheers. Chosen Women was less prone to big stadium theatrics.

-- Rather than using the Coliseum, a football stadium in a run-down part of Los Angeles, Chosen Women opted for the feminine-sounding Rose Bowl in bucolic Pasadena, an L.A. suburb known for its mainline Protestant churches. Even the bathrooms in the Rose Bowl had tile with roses painted on them.

-- While Promise Keepers emphasize a bedrock principle of commitment to wife and family, Chosen Women organizers say women don't have nearly the same commitment problems as men. "We're already committed, we don't need to be told," said Lidia Caceres, a Central American woman who attends a church in suburban Los Angeles.

-- Two traits shared by Promise Keepers and Chosen Women: long bathroom lines and not-as-long lines at pay phones, where moms called home to check on the little ones.

-- And while men at Promise Keepers have no problem telling a reporter their age, Chosen Women, if asked the same question, may hedge. As one 50-something woman said: "My age is just like my telephone number; it's unlisted."

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-- By David Finnigan

Texas Baptist Standard publishes online edition

DALLAS (ABP) -- The Baptist Standard, the largest-circulation Baptist state paper, will begin publishing on the Internet May 21, Editor Toby Druin has announced.

The Dallas-based paper with 204,000 subscribers is a weekly news journal of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"For more than 100 years, the Baptist Standard has been Texas Baptists' window on the denominational world," Druin noted. "In putting the Standard on the Internet, we are continuing to do what is required to get the news and feature stories about Baptists into the hands of more people who need to know who Texas Baptists are and what they are doing in Jesus' name."

At first, the cyber version of the Standard will be a condensed replica of the printed edition, Druin said. Visitors to the web site also will receive information about how they can subscribe to the paper's print version.

"The Internet version is not going to replace the Standard. Baptists are used to getting in their mailbox, although soon we plan to offer an Internet subscription, where all of each week's issue can be read on a computer screen," Druin said.

The Standard's Internet address is www.baptiststandard.com.

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-- By ABP staff

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