

# The Future of Abortion Policies In America and the World by the President of the World: Obama

"The first thing I would do as president is to sign the Freedom of Choice Act." ...Obama

The Freedom of Choice Act will eradicate nearly every state and federal abortion law that protects the unborn baby. It would also prevent states from enacting any similar protective measures for the unborn in the future.

Taken from the:



President-elect Barack Obama has pledged to unite the country, but a promise he has made on abortion rights threatens to fan the flames of a ferocious culture war and herald "one of the most divisive periods in American history."

Mr. Obama said during his campaign that one of his first acts as president would be to sign into law the Freedom of Choice Act, a bill that both supporters and opponents say would go far beyond the landmark Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*, which made abortion legal in 1973.

Supporters insist the act is necessary to stop the chipping away of abortion rights that has occurred over the years, but opponents say the act represents the most far-reaching advancement of abortion rights, and essentially means abortion without limits.

Despite the *Roe v. Wade* decision, there are 550 regulations on abortion among the 50 states, and they reveal the complex and varying attitudes that Americans have toward abortion.

They include such measures as mandatory 24-hour-wait periods between visiting a clinic and having the procedure, bans on state tax dollars to fund abortions, required parental notification for minors and informed consent rules that mandate doctors discuss options to abortion. Some states, such as Louisiana and Oklahoma, require doctors to ask the woman to look at an ultrasound before aborting her child.

Michigan, which is considered the most restrictive jurisdiction, also prohibits groups that receive state funds to make referrals for abortion. It also applies informed consent and parental notification rules to the RU-486 pill, which is usually used to terminate pregnancies in the first few days of conception. Oregon, considered the most pro-choice state, allows taxpayer dollars to fund abortions and has few other restrictions.

The Freedom of Choice Act, also known as FOCA, would essentially eliminate all federal and state restrictions on abortion.

"Americans have no idea how radical and sweeping this bill is," said Clarke Forsythe, an attorney for the pro-life

group Americans United For Life.

The Roe v. Wade decision was decided over the issue of privacy but did not declare abortion a fundamental right, Mr. Forsythe said. That is why restrictions on abortion have been upheld, he said. For example, the Hyde Amendment, which bars federal funds to pay for abortions, was upheld by the court as constitutional. Last year, the court also upheld restrictions on the controversial practice of partial birth abortions, in which the life of a late-term fetus emerging from the woman can still be aborted.

But because the proposed bill calls abortion a fundamental right, Mr. Forsythe and others say, it would trump all other restrictions and regulations.

Supporters of FOCA say it would effectively stop this incremental eroding of abortion rights brought in by most state governments and Supreme Court decisions and would help restore medicaid funding for abortions, especially to poor women.

"[T]his court has unravelled more than 30 years of precedent protecting women's health.... The future of legal access to abortion in this country is grim," said a statement from Planned Parenthood. "It's time for Congress to stand up for women's health, women's safety, and a woman's right to make her own medical decisions. We call on Congress to pass the Freedom of Choice Act."

But opponents say FOCA would mean abortion without limits that would pave the way for an unparalleled destruction of fetuses. They also say that there is evidence that all those restrictions have reduced the number of abortions nationwide by about 20% since the 1990s.

"This act would eliminate the very modest restraints and regulations established by states, provide government funding for abortions, and in its present form, require religiously sponsored hospitals and clinics to perpetrate abortions or go out of business," wrote conservative Catholic commentator Father Richard Neuhaus in the magazine First Things.

"If president-elect Obama does what he says he wants to do, this champion of national unity will preside over one of the most divisive periods in American history."

Time magazine's correspondent in Rome recently quoted Vatican sources who said passing the bill "would be the equivalent of a war."

Richard Land, one of the most power evangelical leaders in the country, and president of Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said he opposes FOCA but thinks there is a reasonable chance that Mr. Obama will avoid the issue for now.

"It would be a pretty stupid political move on his part to placate the left. I don't think Obama wants to alienate all those people in the middle. But who knows? Who knows who the real Barack Obama is? We have elected a president we know less about than any president in our history.

"[But] if he's looking for an excuse to postpone these decisions, the economy certainly gives you one. I could make a compelling case that we have to get the economy worked out and we'll put these other issues off to later."

Roman Catholic Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Chicago said in an interview that potential impact on the Catholic health care system would be "devastating."

"It would invalidate all government conscience clause protections that currently allow doctors, nurses and the hospital itself that we won't do abortions," he said. "It would mean that the federal government would be saying to all hospitals you would have to do abortions - and our moral teachings say that's impossible at a Catholic hospital."

One concern is that the bill would tie receiving funds to obeying FOCA. "That in itself would be a very high impact because I can't think of any hospital that wouldn't have some federal funding. If there's a loss of funding in any way that would be a major impact."

About 12.5% of all hospitals in the United States are Catholic and they see 5.5 million patients a year.

"If it passes it would be devastating to Catholic health care and would put us out of business. No law has ever gone so far," Bishop Paprocki added.

Polls in the United States consistently show strong measure of support for legal abortion, but with a large number of restrictions.

A recent ABC/Washington Post poll showed 57% of Americans favouring legal abortion in most cases. And that number climbs to 80% in cases of the health of the mother and incest and rape. However, 57% oppose abortion to end unwanted pregnancies, 69% oppose partial birth abortions and 86% oppose it after the second trimester.

But not all abortion opponents believe the alarms need to go off yet. Kristen Day, from the Democrats For Life, said that the bill is so radical she would be surprised if it gets anywhere.

Her group would like to see abortion made illegal one day, but said the main focus now should be on abortion reduction. The Pregnant Women Support Act, which would provide funding for prenatal and postnatal care, as well as supply funding for poor women and students to have their child, is also in front of Congress and elements of it were in the Democratic platform.

"Obama told us he's going to work to reduce the abortion rate and we're going to take him at his word that he will do that. He's made a lot of promises. So we'll see."

Still, she said there is a benefit to having FOCA debated even if it is a long shot in Congress.

"Any time you have an issue like this it's good to remind people when life begins. Ending abortion is the ultimate goal for us and those who believe in the sanctity of life. But it is good to bring up a bill like this to show what can happen if we don't continue to elect pro-life legislators."

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More to come in the future, I will add the possibility of Obama's attempt to support International Abortion Laws with US Taxpayer support via the UN.