



Winter 2009

The Gift of Life

Newsletter of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Worcester, MA

Visit us at: www.worcesterdiocese.org (click on "Respect Life" under the departments tab)

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FOCA: A Radical Threat to Human Life

from The National Committee for a Human Life Amendment

We are facing the most serious threat to pro-life policies ever—the "Freedom of Choice Act", or FOCA.

This bill would create a right to abortion the government could not limit and bring about a national abortion policy far worse than the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision. For the first time, abortion would become an *entitlement* the government must fund and promote. Citizens would lose the freedom they now have to enact even modest regulation of the abortion industry.

FOCA would:

- Eliminate regulations that protect women from unsafe clinics and unscrupulous abortionists, including the elimination of informed consent laws
- Force American taxpayers to fund abortions
- Force every state to allow partial-birth abortions—its sponsors have said a primary purpose of the bill is to ensure that killing partially born children will again be permitted nationwide

• Run roughshod over the conscience rights of physicians, nurses, and hospitals that oppose abortion on religious, moral or ethical grounds

• Strip parents of their right and responsibility to be involved in their minor daughter's abortion decision

Simply put, if FOCA becomes law, it will put at risk all the widely-supported laws that for 35 years have promoted women's health, ensured informed consent, protected minors, ensured parental involvement, safeguarded rights of conscience, and respected the desire of most citizens not to support abortion with their tax dollars.

FOCA also explicitly encourages challenges in court against any law or regulation that protects unborn children and their mothers and families in the abortion context, promising a virtual cottage industry of lawsuits. And FOCA's tentacles would reach beyond federal policies to every state and local law or regulation having to do with abortion.

FOCA is without doubt the most radical abortion legislation ever considered in the United States.

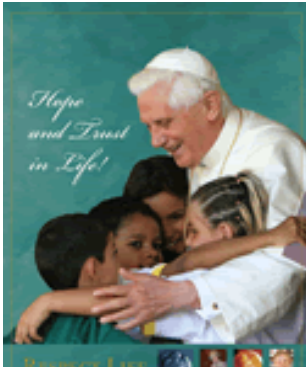
Abortion supporters have been trying to pass FOCA since 1989—and now we have a Congress more disposed than any in recent years to pass the bill, and a new President who has said he will sign the measure into law.

Your Voice is Needed More Than Ever!

At this time of serious national challenges, Americans should unite to serve the good of all, born and unborn—not single out the most defenseless human beings for an expanded attack on their lives. *Please urge your federal elected officials to oppose FOCA or any similar measure, and to retain laws against the federal funding and promotion of abortion.* FOCA embodies the public policy goals of pro-abortion groups. These groups will promote the bill's passage directly, and advance its agenda by working to reverse pro-life laws one at a time.

Continued...

FOCA - continued



“The proclamation of life, life in abundance, must be the heart of the new evangelization.”

- Pope Benedict XVI

At their November meeting, the United States Bishops' Conference voted to mobilize the resources of the conference, dioceses, and the entire Catholic community to oppose FOCA and all other attempts to eliminate existing pro-life laws and policies.

The Diocese of Worcester will join dioceses nationwide in a **postcard signing event the weekend of Jan. 24-25, 2009**, urging members of Congress to reject the abortion extremism of FOCA. Parishioners will have the opportunity to sign and send postcards

to their federal elected officials urging them to oppose FOCA and to retain existing laws against government funding and promotion of abortion.

How You Can Help

- **SIGN POSTCARDS** in your parish on January 24/25!

- Offer to **help your parish pro-life committee** with the project

- **Learn** all you can about FOCA and **share** this information with others

- **Write** a thoughtful letter, make a **phone** call, and/or

meet with your senators and representative.

- Write **letters to the editor** of local papers (see helpful guidelines on our website).

- **PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!**

- Visit www.nchla.org to learn about the email campaign to be set up at a later date.

- Subscribe to the Diocese of Worcester's Respect Life email list for updates as they occur, by emailing: aledoux@worcesterdiocese.org and request to be added to the list. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

visit: www.usccb.org/prolife and www.nchla.org.

MARCH FOR LIFE - 2009



National Prayer Vigil for Life - Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC

January 22, 2009 marks the 36th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Each year thousands of people gather in Washington, DC on this anniversary to March for Life.

Pilgrims from the Diocese of Worcester will board busses for the trip following the annual Respect Life Mass on Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 7:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Paul. You don't have to be going to Washington to attend this Mass!

Anyone is welcome to come and join in prayer as we begin the vigil for the **January 22nd Day of Prayer and Penance** for an end to abortion and all offenses committed against the dignity of the human person and for the full restoration of the legal guaranty of the right to life.

The faithful are encouraged to offer personal acts of prayer and penance on this day, similar to our Lenten practices. Private and parish devotions are encouraged. Holy Hours for Life, recitation of the Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet, special Masses

or other acts of prayer and worship would be fitting on this occasion. Many liturgical resources for this purpose are available at <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/liturgy/index.shtml>.

The Diocesan Respect Life Office will continue to accept reservations for the bus trip to the March for Life as long as space permits. Cost is \$70 per person and registration forms may be downloaded at the Respect Life pages of our website at www.worcesterdiocese.org.

OUR VOICE IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER.



A new, very serious threat to human life has arisen:
The Freedom of Choice Act.

FOCA eliminates
regulations that protect women from
unsafe abortion clinics

FOCA forces
taxpayers to fund abortions

FOCA requires
all states to allow "partial birth" and
other late-term abortions

FOCA subjects
women to abortions by nonphysicians

FOCA violates
the conscience rights of nurses, doctors,
and hospitals

FOCA strips
parents of their right to be involved in
their minor daughters' abortion decision

The Catholic bishops of the United States have unanimously called us to prayer and action to prevent passage of the radical "Freedom of Choice Act" (FOCA) and to oppose other attempts to overturn existing pro-life laws and policies. This year, our voices are needed more than ever.

Pro-abortion groups and their allies in Congress are promoting a radical bill called the "Freedom of Choice Act." If this extreme measure is enacted, widely supported and constitutionally sound abortion regulations will be knocked down nationwide.

If passed into law, FOCA will impose upon the entire country an abortion regime far worse than anything brought on by *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. And the current level of 1.1 million abortions a year will go up, not down.

Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard to contact the offices of your Representative and two Senators: 202.224.3121.

Urge them to oppose FOCA.

For more resources, see www.nchla.org.

TELL CONGRESS:
Please pledge now to oppose FOCA!



United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops
Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities
www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion

Made possible by the generous support of the Knights of Columbus.

“Women and Children First?”

by Fr. Peter R. Beaulieu, special to The Catholic Free Press

A decade ago, the release of the movie “Titanic” prompted an article in *The New Yorker* magazine that highlighted the seismic change in the public morality of America, between the early twentieth century and our own. After the doomed unsinkable ship had struck an iceberg and the capacity of the lifeboats was deemed insufficient for all the passengers on board, the agreed-upon moral standard of the day, as to who should be saved was “women and children first.” The author of that article did not believe such a standard would offer guidance in any modern disaster of similar scope and proportions because of fundamental changes in society’s moral perspectives.

Today, expanding choice and deflecting threats to increasing the scope of the choices that Americans can make has great appeal and, now, serves as the means of judging how we should live in a pluralistic society. Yet, merely choosing is not a significant moral quality; people may choose a course of action which adversely affects someone else’s ability to choose.

The Freedom of Choice Act (or FOCA) traffics in the appeal that choice has to the contemporary way American way of thinking

and living. The choices that FOCA seeks to create as legal rights will not only prove to be morally reprehensible, but its implication could be so disastrous for Catholic hospitals that passage of this bill by Congress or executive action might be the beginning of the end of the Church’s involvement with and/or sponsorship of acute care hospitals.

While subject to legal interpretation, FOCA seeks an unassailable status for the so-called right to choose, a word which is a euphemism for abortion. Thus, any and all restrictions on access to abortion would be dismantled by this legislation: restrictions on government funding, parental notification laws, mandatory information on alternatives to abortion, the national ban on

Catholic hospitals and for individual physicians, would be overthrown by FOCA’s broad scope, namely, anything and any institution or individual claim that restricts access to abortion would not be left standing after its passage.

The long-standing mission that women’s religious congregations have provided to this nation through the hospitals that were founded a century or more ago by their sacrifices might be

crippled by this law; one or two of the nation’s bishops have even ventured to say that FOCA would force Catholic hospitals to close and, due to the heinous nature of abortion, their sale to other-than-Catholic entities would not be possible, since that would involve the Church or the sponsoring-religious life and, to do so in a morally upright manner -- as stewards of the lives God has entrusted to us and

not as life’s owners. It should still be women and children first, because life is a gift—not a choice—the forced choice envisioned by this legislation is tyranny, not freedom.

Fr. Beaulieu is the bishop’s liaison to Catholic hospitals in the Diocese of Worcester, a member of the diocesan Respect Life Committee, and a member of the Subcommittee on Healthcare for the Massachusetts Catholic Conference.

Diocesan TV Ministry has produced a cable show on FOCA as part of the “Conversations with Bishop McManus” series. It will begin airing on local cable stations on January 10th. Broadcast dates and times are as follows:

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| Charter Communications 29 cities/towns that carry WCTR TV3 on their system | Jan. 10 at 6:00 p.m. Rebroadcast on the following Mondays at 6 a.m. & Wed . at 9:30 a.m. after the Daily Mass |
| SPAC TV28 (Shrewsbury) | Sunday, Jan. 11 at 7:30 a.m., 5 p.m. and on Monday, Jan 12 at 7:30 a.m. |
| Clinton area Community Cable TV 8 | Sunday, Jan 11 at 8:30 a.m. |
| WCCA TV13 (Worcester only) | Tuesday, Jan. 13 at 8 p.m. |
| Fitchburg TV 8 | Thursday, Jan. 15 at 9:30 a.m., 5 p.m. and Friday Jan. 16 at 9:30 a.m. |
| Leominster LATV | Mondays at 9:30 am; Wednesdays at 3:30 pm; Thursdays at 9 am; Sundays at 9 am |
| Milford MCTV 8 | Thursdays at 6 p.m. |
| Athol/Orange Cable Access | Wednesdays and Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. |
| Grafton Cable Access | Sundays at 10:30 a.m. |

Can’t get the station in your town? Watch it online at your convenience at www.worcesterdiocese.org and click on the icon in the lower right of the Home Page.