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January 17, 2008

RE: Vitter Amendment to S. 1200 (abortion funding)

Dear Senator:

The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) urges you to vote for an amendment that Senator Vitter will offer when the Senate takes up S. 1200, the Indian health care reauthorization bill, on January 22. The Vitter Amendment would codify a longstanding policy against funding of abortions with federal Indian Health Service (IHS) funds (except to save the life of the mother, or in cases of rape or incest).

For Medicaid, federal funding of abortion was restricted beginning in 1976 by enactment of the Hyde Amendment to the annual DHHS appropriations bill. **However, because the IHS is funded through the separate Interior appropriations bill, which has never contained a "Hyde Amendment," the IHS continued to pay for abortion on demand long after the Hyde Amendment was enacted.** The Reagan Administration curbed the practice administratively in 1982, as a temporary fix. Subsequently, in an IHS reauthorization bill in 1988, Congress enacted 25 U.S.C. § 1676, which said that any abortion funding limitations found in the HHS appropriations measure in effect at any given time will also apply to the IHS. That requirement, which would be continued under S. 1200 as reported, provides no real assurance that federal IHS funds will not be used to pay for abortion on demand in the future, because the language of future HHS appropriations bills depends upon a host of legislative and political contingencies. Rather than merely extending such a convoluted arrangement, NRLC urges adoption of Senator Vitter's amendment, which would codify the longstanding policy: ***No federal funds for abortion, except to save the life of the mother, or in cases of rape or incest*** – the same policy as contained in the "Hyde Amendment" provision of the annual DHHS appropriations bill since 1997.

In short, if you are opposed to direct federal funding of abortion on demand, you should support the Vitter Amendment. Rejection of the Vitter Amendment would have the effect of leaving the door open to future federal funding of abortion on demand by the IHS.

**We anticipate that the roll call on the Vitter Amendment will be included in NRLC's scorecard of key pro-life votes of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. If there should be an attempt to prevent a vote on the Vitter Amendment through procedural means, NRLC reserves the right to score the cloture or other dispositive procedural vote as well.**

Thank you for your consideration of NRLC's position on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Johnson".

Douglas Johnson  
Legislative Director  
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