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**Re: Vote "Yes" on the Smith-Stupak Amendment
to Prevent Tax Subsidies for Abortion-Promoting Groups Overseas**

Dear Member of Congress:

When the House considers the State-Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill (as yet unnumbered), the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) urges you to support the amendment to be offered by Reps. Chris Smith and Bart Stupak (the co-chairs of the House Pro-Life Caucus) to remove bill language that would mandate U.S. subsidies to organizations that actively promote abortion in foreign nations.

Congresswoman Nita Lowey, who chairs the Appropriations subcommittee that wrote the bill, inserted language that would effectively overturn the pro-life "Mexico City Policy." This vital pro-life policy was originally adopted by President Reagan and announced at a 1984 population conference in Mexico City. The policy was reinstated by President Bush in 2001. Under this policy, in order to be eligible for U.S. "population assistance," a private organization must sign a contract promising not to perform abortions (except to save the mother's life or in cases of rape or incest), lobby to change the abortion laws of host countries, or otherwise "actively promote abortion as a method of family planning."

The most important characteristic of the Mexico City Policy is that it establishes an eligibility criterion for U.S. funding: If a group is unwilling to agree to avoid promotion of abortion, that group will not receive any type of U.S. support. In short, the Mexico City Policy is not about how an organization keeps its books. Rather, it is about the type of groups the United States is going to support. If a specific organization declines to accept the policy, then the same funds are channeled to other organizations that agree to the contract. There is, therefore, no overall reduction in funding for family planning programs resulting from the Mexico City Policy.

Rep. Lowey has said that her bill language would "only" allow abortion-promoting groups to receive U.S.-funded contraceptives. If that were what the language actually did, it would still re-establish U.S. assistance to groups that are determined to promote abortion as a method of family planning, which we oppose and would urge members to vote against. However, the Lowey language actually does far more -- on its face, it prohibits the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) from denying grants to an abortion-promoting organization if the organization's program "includes" contraceptives. Under this language, even the most aggressively pro-abortion groups would recover full eligibility for U.S. cash assistance, as well as other forms of assistance.

Moreover, unless the Smith-Stupak Amendment is adopted, the entire bill clearly falls under the warning given by President Bush in his May 3 letter to Speaker Pelosi: "I will veto any

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legislation that weakens current Federal policies and laws on abortion, or that encourages the destruction of human life at any stage.” That letter specifically used as an example provisions of law that have “ensured that taxpayer funds do not underwrite organizations that perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning.” (See <http://www.nrlc.org/Records/PresidentBushToPelosiProLifeVetoes.pdf>)

The vote on the Smith-Stupak Amendment is entirely an abortion policy vote – it has nothing whatever to do with funding levels for contraceptive programs, anti-HIV/AIDS programs, or any of the other diversionary issues raised by opponents of the Mexico City Policy.

NRLC will include the roll call on the Smith-Stupak Amendment in its scorecard of key pro-life votes of the 110th Congress. NRLC also reserves the right to score the vote on final passage of the appropriations bill, unless the Lowey provision is removed by adoption of the Smith-Stupak Amendment.

Thank you for considering NRLC’s views on this legislation

Sincerely,



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