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**SOLID MAJORITY OF U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES VOTES TO PREVENT
ABORTION OF PAIN-CAPABLE UNBORN CHILDREN,
BUT 154 LAWMAKERS VOTE TO DEFEND CURRENT D.C. POLICY
OF LEGAL ABORTION FOR ANY REASON UNTIL BIRTH**

WASHINGTON – In a landmark vote, a solid majority of the U.S. House of Representatives today voted to reject the current abortion policy of the District of Columbia, which permits legal abortion for any reason until birth, and to replace it with a law that would generally prevent abortion after 20 weeks fetal age.

The legislation is the *District of Columbia Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act* (H.R. 3803). The vote was 220-154 in favor of the bill – a strong majority (a 66 vote margin), although short of the two-thirds vote required under the fast-track procedure utilized today (“suspension of the rules”).

“Today’s groundbreaking majority vote constitutes a giant step towards this bill ultimately becoming law -- perhaps after the replacement of some of the lawmakers who today were unwilling to protect pain-capable unborn children in the sixth month of pregnancy and later,” said Douglas Johnson, legislative director for the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), the national federation of state right-to-life organizations. **“154 House members will have to explain to their constituents why they voted to endorse a policy of legal abortion for any reason, until the moment of birth, in their nation’s capital.”**

H.R. 3803 contains findings that by 20 weeks after fertilization (if not earlier), the unborn child has the capacity to experience great pain. (This is equivalent to 22 weeks in the alternate “LMP” or “weeks of pregnancy” dating system used by ob-gyns and abortion providers.) The bill prohibits abortion after that point, except when an acute physical condition endangers the life of the mother. Nine states have already enacted abortion limitations based on the pain suffered by unborn children; no court orders have blocked enforcement of any of those laws.

The District Clause of the U.S. Constitution (found in Article I, Section 8) provides that “Congress shall . . . exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such District . . .” Like any other “legislation,” of course, laws pertaining to the federal district are subject to the president’s review. Asked about H.R. 3803 today, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney responded, “The president’s position on a woman’s reproductive freedom is well known,” and went on to refer to the legislation as “controversial, divisive social legislation.”

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On July 30, a federal judge in Arizona [upheld as constitutional](#) a new state law that generally prohibits abortion after 18 weeks fetal age (20 weeks of pregnancy) – two weeks earlier than H.R. 3803. U.S. District Judge James A. Teilborg, a Clinton appointee, found that “by 20 weeks, sensory receptors develop all over the child’s body” and “when provoked by painful stimuli, such as a needle, the child reacts, as measured by increases in the child’s stress hormones, heart rate, and blood pressure.” Judge Teilborg also noted, “Given the nature of [D&Es](#) and induction abortions . . . this Court concludes that the State has shown a legitimate interest in limiting abortions past 20 weeks gestational age.”

Also today, Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah), the prime sponsor of the Senate companion bill (S. 2103, which has 30 cosponsors), filed the bill as an amendment to an unrelated bill that is currently pending on the Senate floor, S. 3414.

The NRLC website provides links to abundant documentation on the scientific studies that support the bill’s findings that unborn children, by 20 weeks fetal age if not before, have the capacity to experience great pain, [here](#). The abortion method most often used at this stage, the “D&E,” is depicted in a medical illustration, [here](#). Recent polling and other information on the legislation is also posted at http://www.nrlc.org/abortion/Fetal_Pain/index.html

Founded in 1968, the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), the federation of 50 state right-to-life affiliates and more than 3,000 local chapters, is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots pro-life organization.