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**PUBLIC TESTIMONY PUBLIC TESTIMONY  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE AFFAIRS  
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APRIL 2, 2007

Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann  
Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee and thank you for letting me testify this afternoon. My name is Bishop Kevin Vann of the Diocese of Fort Worth and I am speaking today on behalf of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas. On behalf of the Bishops of Texas, I thank you for your public service.

Today the committee will be discussing a number of bills relating to the subject of the right to life. As pastors and teachers, we proclaim that human life is a precious gift from God; that each person who receives this gift has responsibilities toward God, themselves and others; and that society, through its laws and social institutions, must protect and nurture human life at every stage of its existence. These beliefs flow from ordinary reason and from our faith's constant witness that "life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception"—a teaching that has been a constant part of the Christian message since the apostolic age. Since 1973, scientific developments have confirmed that at conception, a new human being, with unique genetic blueprint has been created.

While there are several bills the Committee is considering today, it is best if I focus what little time I have on two specific bills. First, let me begin with HB 175, a proposal that would allow the State Attorney General to ban abortions in our state should the United States Supreme Court ever strike down *Roe v. Wade* or should enough States ever ratify a human life amendment to the Constitution. The Bishops of Texas support HB 175 and ask this Committee to pass the bill and send it to the House floor.

We support the bill because when the Supreme Court of the United States gave our nation *Roe v. Wade* and its companion decision *Doe v. Bolton*, the high court effectively removed every legal protection from human beings prior to birth. The legacy of *Roe* has been staggering, leaving in its wake:

- the deaths of millions of the unborn,
- countless women traumatized so deeply by abortion that they spend years struggling to find peace, healing, and reconciliation,
- marriages and families damaged; and
- a society increasingly coarsened by the toleration and acceptance of acts that purposely destroy human life.

We understand that the bill would not end abortions in Texas today but we believe that the passage of HB 175 is an important step towards that eventual goal.

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I am also here to give our support to HB 1750, a bill that would mandate the collection of statistical data pertaining to the number and type of abortions performed in our state, and the collection of statistical data surrounding the use of the judicial bypass in order to obtain abortions for minors. The Church has always supported a parent's legal right to be able to consent as to whether or not his or her child could have an abortion. I believe that most Americans understand that if parents must give consent for doctors to perform tonsillectomies on their children, then parents must have the same responsibility when it comes to the medical procedure of abortion. Unfortunately, the judicial bypass around parental rights is the law, despite what most Americans would prefer. However, we are asking that statistical information be gathered so that legislators can see for themselves whether or not the judicial bypass is protecting our children or hurting them.

HB 1750 would also require that statistics be taken of those women who have suffered complications because of an abortion. At present, we do not have any firm idea as to how many women suffer injuries resulting from difficult or badly performed abortions. Our fear is that there are scores of women among us who have been physically harmed by abortions and that we as a society have been turning a blind eye to those women for the past three decades. Experiences of pastors and those involved in pastoral ministry can confirm this. Your committee will hear from many of these women today. We encourage this Committee to pass this bill as well and send it to the House Floor so that the veil of secrecy surrounding abortions will be lifted.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank you Mr. Chairman and the members of the Committee for giving me this opportunity to address you. I would like to leave you with a passage written by the late Pope John Paul II, whose second anniversary of his death is today, April 2. In his 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. He wrote:

It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop. A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized. Only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society, such as democracy and peace.

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