

National Religious Groups Oppose Ban on Abortion Care After 20 Weeks

May 23, 2013

Dear Representative,

We, the undersigned national religious groups, urge you to oppose H.R.1797, which—when amended as Rep. Frank’s intends—would create a nationwide ban on access to abortion care after 20 weeks with no exceptions for a women’s health or in cases of rape, incest, or fetal anomalies. We stand united across our faith traditions in opposing this extreme legislation.

Proponents of this bill have cited the Kermit Gosnell case as a reason to push this intrusive policy, but the fact is that the lack of access to safe and affordable abortion care is precisely the circumstance that drove women to an unscrupulous person like Gosnell, as it did to so many women before *Roe v. Wade*. The existence of his clinic is a ghastly warning sign of what happens when abortion is so restricted and expensive that a woman in need feels that she has nowhere else to turn.

A family with a wanted pregnancy that goes terribly wrong is confronted with awful decisions that none of us ever want to face. Our religious values call us to offer compassion, support, and respect to a woman and her family facing these difficult circumstances. H.R.1797 will only make a challenging situation worse. When a woman needs an abortion, it is critically important that she have access to safe and legal care.

It is telling that Rep. Franks, in a press release announcing that he would be expanding the focus of H.R.1797 from the District of Columbia to a nationwide ban, does not make even a single reference to a woman, her family, or her situation.

Like all Americans, Rep. Franks is free to have and share his own religious beliefs about issues related to pregnancy and parenting. Liberty is an American value. However, H.R.1797 is a clear attempt to impose one particular religious belief on the whole nation, and thus represents a gross violation of the freedom to which every American is entitled by the Constitution. The proper role of government in the United States is not to impose one set of religious views on everyone, but to protect each person’s right and ability to make decisions according to their own beliefs and values.

We believe—and Americans, including people of faith, overwhelmingly agree—that the decision to end a pregnancy is best left to a woman in consultation with her family, her doctor, and her faith. **Our laws should support and safeguard a woman’s health – not deny access to care.** Please show compassion for women and respect for religious liberty by opposing HR 1797.

In faith,