

Administration will not argue abortion case

By Liz Schevtchuk
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration has decided not to present arguments before the Supreme Court in a Minnesota abortion case but still favors overturning legal abortion, a Justice Department official said Sept. 27.

The administration said, however, that it will file a friend-of-the-court brief in the case, and pro-lifers said its decision to not appear formally in the court is of little importance.

"We are not seeking permission to present oral arguments in the Minnesota case," said Dan Eramian, deputy director of the Justice Department's office of public affairs.



Pro-life Catholics march in a Sept. 24 Rally for Life in Trenton, New Jersey. The march attracted 10,000 participants.

"It is not true that the administration is backing off on its commitment to reverse Roe vs. Wade," the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling legalizing abortion nationwide, he told Catholic News Service Sept. 27. "The

administration is still committed to overturning that."

The case, Hodgson vs. Minnesota, involves a Minnesota stipulation that 48 hours before having an abortion a pregnant

girl under age 18 should provide written notification to both parents — even in cases of the parents' divorce or separation.

Eramian said that while the Justice Department is filing a friend-of-the-court brief in the Minnesota case, it had not been finalized as of Sept. 27 so he could not discuss its content.

The Supreme Court clerk's office said the court has extended the deadline for filing briefs to Oct. 14, giving attorneys for the government or other parties more time to file their comments.

Also pending before the Supreme Court in its 1989-90 term, running from Oct. 2 until mid-summer, are two more abortion law cases — another parental notification statute (from Ohio), and an abortion clinic regulation statute from Illinois.

A Justice Department source, who discussed the administration's interest in the cases on the condition of not being identified, said the department chose not to file friend-of-the-court briefs in those disputes.

The Justice Department's decision to not argue the Minnesota case personally "is not significant one way or the other," said James Bopp Jr., general counsel for the National Right to Life Committee.

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