

# La. law disallows most abortions

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Louisiana's legislators late July 8 passed the country's toughest abortion legislation after the state Senate July 7 failed by three votes to override Gov. Buddy Roemer's veto of an even tougher bill.

At a news conference July 9, Roemer said he would not act immediately on the new legislation, but called it "a step in the right direction."

The new legislation met his objection to the first bill, which banned all abortions except to save the life of a mother and was passed by the House June 14 and the Senate June 26. The new bill would also permit abortions in cases of rape and incest — an exception the governor said all along he demanded.

Attorney General William Guste, a pro-life advocate, had asked Roemer not to act quickly either way on the new bill, Roemer said, adding that he would take a long look at the measure. He had 20 days in which to veto it.

By law the legislative session was to end at midnight July 9, meaning that if the governor vetoed the measure a special session would have to be called to consider it.

Intended to challenge the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision that legalized abortion, the new Louisiana legislation subjects convicted abortionists to one to 10 years in prison and fines of between \$10,000 and \$100,000. Women having abortions would not be subject to penalty.

By a 73-31 vote late July 6, the Louisiana House of Representatives overrode Roemer's veto of the earlier legislation.

The state Senate also voted 23-16 to override, but 26 votes were required. A

move to reconsider the legislation was not used because the votes to override were still considered lacking.

To avoid a rule requiring committee action on new legislation, a bill that would have lowered penalties for assaulting flag burners was amended with the anti-abortion measure, and then the flag-burning sections were dropped.

The Senate vote was 32-7. Within an hour, the House also approved it 83-22. Seventy votes were required to override a veto.

Rep. Woody Jenkins, author of the tougher, vetoed bill, voted against the compromise but said he believed the bill could still be used as a court test on *Roe vs. Wade* should it become law.

"This has been agony for everyone," he said. "Abortion is one of those issues every American will have to step forward on."

Pennsylvania now has the nation's toughest law, which requires a 24-hour waiting period before an abortion can be obtained.

A law passed earlier this year by the Guam territorial legislature bans all abortions except to save the mother, but it was not being enforced pending a court test.

In other abortion-related developments, Bishop James T. McHugh of Camden, N.J., reiterated a diocesan policy that Catholic politicians backing legal abortion should not receive church honors, but he rejected excommunication of public figures.

"In dealing with Catholics in public life," Bishop McHugh said, "I do not see the use of spiritual penalties as the most

appropriate approach."

He also said in a letter to his priests that they were empowered to remit excommunications of Catholics for procuring abortions, but he urged them to keep "a rough count" of those.

Meanwhile, the director of a Corpus Christi, Texas, abortion clinic and a doctor who performed abortions at another clinic announced that Bishop Rene H. Gracida of Corpus Christi had told them they had incurred automatic excommunication.

Rachel Vargas, administrator of Reproductive Services in Corpus Christi, said she was informed of her excommunication by a June 1 decree. She also said the bishop had sent her warnings in January and March.

On June 30, Dr. Eduardo Aquino, who reportedly performs 60 to 75 abortions a month, announced that he too was excommunicated.

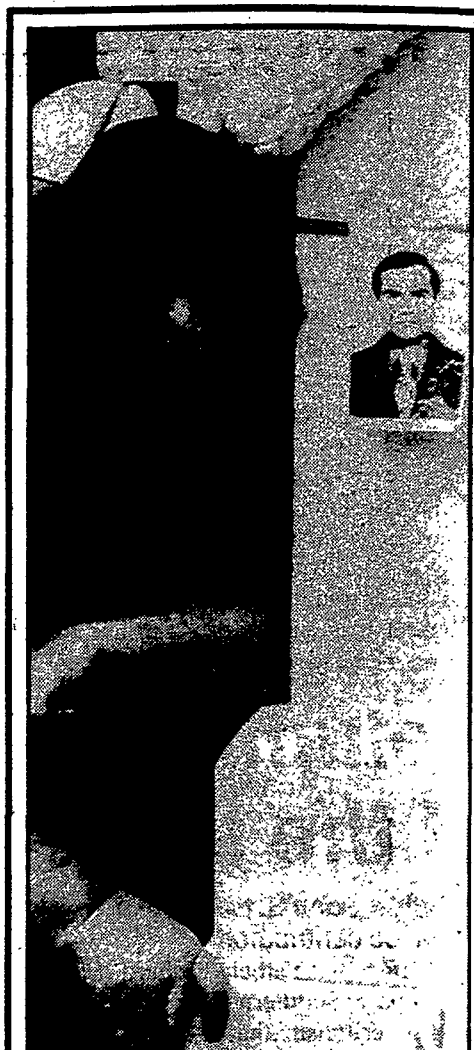
Elva Bustamante, who directs the New Women's Clinic where Dr. Aquino works, said she had received similarly worded warnings but had not received a decree of excommunication.

A statement issued by the diocese said that Bishop Gracida was disappointed his letters had been made public.

Other developments included:

- The National Education Association convention rejected by voice vote July 6 a move to end the union's lobbying for abortion rights.

- A Michigan group opposed to abortion said July 6 it had filed petitions with sufficient signatures to force legislative action on a bill requiring parental permission for an abortion.




AP/Wide World Photos  
**FALLEN SON** — A woman cries by the grave of her son at the Heroes cemetery in Bucharest, June 22, during a commemorative ceremony for people killed during the revolution in Romania last December.

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