

WORLD & NATION



CNS/Bob Roller

Participants in the annual March for Life demonstrate in front of the Supreme Court Jan. 22 in Washington to mark the anniversary of the court's 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision that legalized abortion. The National Park Service estimated 60,000 people took part in the march.

March for Life draws 60,000 to Washington

WASHINGTON (CNS) — At a rally kicking off the annual March for Life Jan. 22, speaker after speaker targeted President Clinton, calling for his defeat.

Several weeks of harsh winter weather, flooding in several Eastern states and related traffic problems around Washington seemed to have deterred some people from coming and delayed the arrival of other participants for the march, which commemorates the 1973 (*Roe vs. Wade*) Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion.

But after a light turnout early on, by the time marchers headed for the Supreme Court building from the rally site behind the White House, the crowd had grown to 60,000, as estimated by National Park Service Police — including hundreds of marchers from the Diocese of Rochester.

Later, march organizer Nellie Gray claimed there were 125,000 participants.

In a nearly 90-minute rally on the mud-covered Ellipse, a dozen Republican members of Congress urged a supportive audience to make Clinton's defeat in November's election the focus of their efforts. Other speakers representing churches and nonpolitical organizations focused on asking Clinton to reverse his opposition to bills that would outlaw partial-birth abortion procedures.

"Bill Clinton is an abortionist, and we need to get him out of the White House today," said Rep. Steve Stockman, R-Texas. He went on to suggest that Medicare and Medicaid are in financial trouble because legal abortion has meant there will be 30 million fewer young people to pay taxes "when we get old."

Boston Cardinal Bernard F. Law, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, introduced 20 cardinals, archbishops and bishops and reminded the largely Catholic crowd that "the Catholic Church in the United States is unconditionally pro-life."

He quoted from Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, ("The Gospel of Life") and the U.S. bishops' recent political responsibility statement, both of which stressed "human life is a gift from God."

Cardinal Law asked Clinton to "reject the radical minority and stand with the 71 percent majority of Americans who support the partial-birth abortion ban."

Other speakers from religious denominations included Rabbi Yehuda Levin, who announced that the organization Human Life International would be coordinating a project of Jewish and Christian groups to fight abortion in the Holy Land. Two new features on the Ellipse this

year were a huge menorah and the still-decorated national Christmas tree, left in place by the Park Service longer than usual after the three-week budget furlough and nearly a week of weather shut-downs in Washington.

Politicians addressing the rally included Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., who said "even if the allegations of impropriety ... in the White House all turned out to be true, it would pale in comparison" to the damage done by Clinton to efforts to end abortion. Smith was referring to questions about the involvement of Clinton and first lady Hillary Clinton in the Whitewater real estate dealings and other matters.

Smith, chair of the Congressional Pro-Life Caucus, said the process of passing the bills to outlaw partial-birth abortions brought an end to the "23-year cover-up" of the violence involved in abortion.

A Catholic who was first elected on a pro-life platform, Smith urged the audience to pray, fast and work hard to defeat opponents who support legal abortion.

Relatives of Rep. Bob Dornan, R-Calif., briefly unfurled a "Dornan for President" banner on stage as he spoke. There were also a handful of signs for other presidential candidates, including Alan Keyes and Patrick Buchanan, both pro-life Catholic Republicans.

Other signs among the thousands bouncing across the Ellipse were those reading: "Jail Abortionists," "If the issue was slavery, would there be such a thing as pro-choice?" "Stop the media bias regarding abortion," "The Clintons and the news media are factually challenged (they lie)," "It's not just a woman's body, it's someone's body," "Pick on someone your own size (me)," and "Former fetuses unite."

Students from Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh carried a sign that read: "A person's a person, No matter how small — Dr. Seuss." Others proclaimed: "Abortion steals someone's childhood" and "March real hard, pray much harder."

Earlier in the day, Bill Smith, of St. Rita's Parish in Webster, stood outside a Senate office building, holding a sign that read, "4,000 home-grown American customers murdered each day by abortion."

Smith, a 66-year-old Kodak employee nearing retirement, said this was his 10th or 12th march. He said he uses the lost customer analogy with co-workers who make no connection between abortion and potential customers.

"If we had all those babies that had been aborted," Smith said he tells them, "you and I would be working overtime, not getting laid off."

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