

House OKs cloning ban

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. bishops' pro-life spokeswoman praised the House for passing the Human Cloning Prohibition Act Feb. 27 in a 241-155 vote.

"Today's vote reflects America's rejection of the notion that human life is a commodity to be created for experimentation," said Cathy Cleaver, director of planning and information for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities.

The Human Cloning Prohibition Act, or HR 534, prohibits people from knowingly attempting to perform human cloning or participating in such a procedure by shipping or receiving an embryo produced from human cloning. In previous statements Cleaver has warned that, without a ban on all human cloning, cloning for research would

gain momentum.

Opponents of the bill had proposed legislation that would have allowed cloning research, but this legislation failed Feb. 27 in a 231-174 vote.

The Human Cloning Prohibition Act was sponsored by Reps. Dave Weldon, R-Fla., and Bart Stupak, D-Mich. It is nearly identical to legislation that was approved by the House last summer, but was never acted on by the Senate.

It is also similar to a current bill co-sponsored by Sens. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., and Mary Landrieu, D-La., which would prohibit all cloning research that involves creation of human embryos. It would allow the use of cloning techniques for animals other than humans and for research involving cloned DNA, tissues and organs.

Cleaver noted that some House members who opposed the Weldon-Stupak bill claimed to be against human cloning but in favor of using somatic cell nuclear transfer. She said those who supported this procedure were using deceptive wording because she said the process is "simply the scientific name for the human cloning procedure."

Philadelphia Cardinal Anthony J. Bevilacqua, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, had urged the House to pass the Human Cloning Prohibition Act and criticized the alternative cloning bill, saying it would "directly involve the federal government in registering for-profit human cloning laboratories and supervising their manufacture of human beings as research material."

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., co-chairman of the House Pro-Life Caucus, urged House members from the floor to pass the Weldon-Stupak bill and to vote against legislation that would allow cloning for research which he described as legislation that would "encourage the creation of cloned human embryo stock piles and cloned embryo farms."

After the vote, Knights of Columbus Supreme Knight Carl Anderson said the House "has shown great responsibility in acting to ban all human cloning. The vote clearly re-

fects the views of the majority of Americans who reject human cloning for any reason."

Brownback also praised House members for their "loud, clear and bipartisan voice on the issue of human cloning."

"Now is the time for the Senate to act on this vital issue and ban all human cloning," he said in a statement. "History is watching and the Senate cannot afford to be silent any longer."



Reuters/CNS

Brigitte Boisselier of Clonaid announces Dec. 27 that the company has produced the first human clone with the birth of a baby girl called Eve to a 31-year-old American woman. On Feb. 27, the House approved a ban on human cloning, called the Human Cloning Prohibition Act.

Thanks Giving Appeal falls short

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

The 2002-03 Thanks Giving Appeal is projected to fall 5 to 6 percent short of its \$4.931 million goal, according to Dan Healy, director of stewardship and development for the Diocese of Rochester.

Although significant, this year's shortfall was not as large as those suffered in 1985-86 (more than 11 percent short of goal) or 1999-2000 (more than 7 percent short), according to articles published in the *Catholic Courier*.

As of Feb. 28, 42,950 donors had pledged \$4.573 million to the campaign, Healy said. He added that 3,000 to 4,000 fewer people made pledges to this year's campaign than contributed to last year's TGA. He also said that the average donation decreased from \$105 in 2001-02 to \$102 for 2002-03. By its conclusion in June, the appeal is expected to raise about \$4.6 million, he said.

Healy cited several factors that may have contributed to the decrease in the number and size of donations. Among them were economic downturn and a decline in stock-market values; insecurity over a possible war; and concerns about the sexual-abuse scandal in the church. He added that other charities throughout the nation are suffering similar shortfalls in donations, and that 2002 was a crisis year that shook people's faith in many institutions.

"What makes this unique is the troubles we've had in the last year accentuated all that," he said.



He added that fewer than 100 people wrote in to say that they were withholding or decreasing their donations because of the abuse scandal or opposition to the renovation of Sacred Heart Cathedral, which is slated to conclude by Easter 2004.

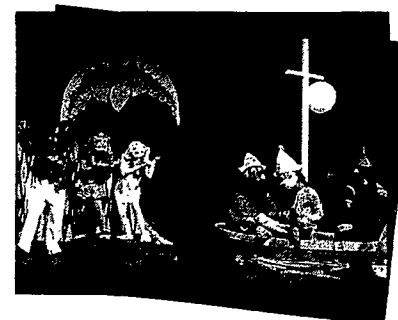
Healy said that "a lot of people like to make their opinions known through money. Some people have chosen to withhold support." Yet he noted that some of those who sent protest letters had never actually given to the appeal in previous years.

The TGA is the diocese's primary fundraiser, and Healy noted that no proceeds from the appeal go to settle abuse lawsuits. He said he respects donors' rights to withhold or decrease donations. But he also pointed out that the TGA is an appeal that serves the whole church, and that more than 40,000 Catholics supported it with their donations. He noted that potential donors are still welcome to make contributions.

"All I'd ask is that people give it a fair shake," Healy said. "The TGA is about services and programs, and everybody can directly or individually benefit from them. We're still a good church, we're still doing good things and an awful lot of people still agree with us."

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