

Local and National Life-Affirming Activities

Congress Likely to Re-Direct Funds

Congress will consider a budget bill that re-directs taxpayer money away from the abortion industry and instead **to community health centers**. These centers provide comprehensive health care for women but do not perform abortions or harvest fetal body parts for profit.

Planned Parenthood (PP) **requires** its affiliates to **perform abortions** and reported performing 324,000 abortions in 2014. The organization has been referred to the Department of Justice and FBI for potential criminal prosecution for trafficking fetal body parts from abortions.

Community health centers (www.getyourcare.org) outnumber PP facilities 20-to-1 nationwide. They offer the same preventative services as PP, but also offer services PP doesn't such as mammograms, prenatal care, and treatment for diabetes, hypertension and arthritis.

The president of PP, Cecile Richards, is former Deputy Chief of Staff for Nancy Pelosi. The organization spent more than \$30 million in the last election cycle to try to defeat **pro-life candidates**. It receives hundreds of millions of taxpayer monies, which may disappear with passage of the Congressional bill. [www.SBA-List.org]

"From each tiny child waiting to be born, to individuals nearing death, all are precious and deserve our care and protection. Women and men suffering after abortion, ... couples longing to conceive a child, ... expectant mothers facing challenging pregnancies, and every other person – each "has a place in God's heart from all eternity" (Amoris Laetitia, #168)." Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of NY, 2016 Chair, Committee on Pro-Life.

New Administration's Pro-Life Promises

Pro-life leaders are putting pressure on the new President to fulfill **four election commitments**: to nominate pro-life justices to the Supreme Court, to sign a law ending painful late-term abortions, end federal funding of Planned Parenthood, and make permanent the Hyde Amendment barring federal funding of abortion.

No one knows yet if the new President's rhetoric was genuine or merely political. But getting some of the work done requires Senate approval, something that is not guaranteed at this point.

One **positive indication** was the President's executive order, signed soon after his taking office, to bar aid funding to international non-governmental groups that perform or promote abortions. The Mexico City Policy as it is known was instituted in 1985 but was rescinded in 2009.

*ed. by Frank Tinari, Ph.D., tinarifr@shu.edu
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At Your Parish: Variety of Ways to Support and Respect Life

■ **The Holy Heroes Spiritual Adoption Prayer Adventure**, a Catholic education program, helps kids better understand how babies grow and develop, and fosters a culture of life in children without directly addressing abortion. [holyheroes.com]

Mary Mack helped to research and develop the content. The online program "focuses on the positive, that this is a child, this is how you started, this is **how a baby develops and grows**," she said. It includes puzzles, games and music and stories to listen to. Individuals can sign up, or it can be used in parish children's groups. The program lasts for nine months, and after the baby is "born", participants have a final quiz and are asked to continue praying for the unborn and their parents.

"It's simple enough for young children to understand, but it's not dumbed down so that older children can't appreciate it," Mack said. "I've heard positive comments that **children enjoy learning about babies**, and it seems to be a fun way to learn where they came from." [*Our Sunday Visitor*, 1/22/2017]

■ Some parish Respect Life Ministries give a **red rose** to moms and dads when they bring their child for **baptism**. The rose is usually accompanied by a **certificate** honoring the parents who have chosen to give and nourish life in their young ones. [btinari@optonline.net]

■ Crisis pregnancy centers and services all over the country benefit from the popular **baby-bottle campaigns**. Plastic baby bottles are distributed in parishes, people fill them with coins, currency and checks, and the money is donated to benefit local pro-life organizations. Many of the drives are organized by Knights of Columbus councils.

"Our main focus for pro-life is providing ultrasound machines across the country, and we encourage our councils to be involved in pro-life activities," said Joe Cullen of communications at the KofC headquarters in New Haven, Conn. "Many of them do baby-bottle projects as part of being there for moms and their babies. We want children to be born, and **once they are born, we want to give them help** and be there for them in a practical way." [*Our Sunday Visitor*, 1/22/2017]

■ **Baby showers** are a way of supporting local pregnancy centers. Some churches plan a date when parishioners can bring gifts that new moms could use such as baby pajamas, clothing, diapers, etc. For more information, contact Good Counsel Homes. [goodcounselhomes.org]

Memorials Honor Children, Offer Healing for Families

Eric Scheidler, executive director of Pro-Life Action League (Chicago), believes the 370 parish memorials to the unborn listed at AbortionMemorials.com are only a fraction of what's out there. The list was compiled from participants in their National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children, organized in September with Priests for Life and Citizens for a Pro-Life Society. "We often receive new listings from someone who wants to hold a prayer vigil," Scheidler said. "We welcome hearing from anyone who would like to be added to the list."

People are encouraged to visit memorials to **pray in mourning for children** lost to abortion, Scheidler added. The website has several prayers that can be printed and used at the memorials, which may be simple markers or more elaborate gardens dedicated to all lost children, not just those aborted.



One such memorial is Our Lady of Sorrows Memorial Garden, St. Joseph Church (Waxahachie, Texas), built after the sister of then-Father Mark Seitz (now bishop of the Diocese of El Paso) suffered a miscarriage. "He became aware of how **parents need closure & want to remember their babies,**" parish pro-life head Georgia Fitzhugh said.

Since the garden was dedicated in 1999, the remains of 17 miscarried or stillborn babies (32 weeks or less in gestation) have been buried in a semi-circle around the statue of the Pietà. There are also about 100 entries engraved in the Book of Remembrance. "We don't ask questions about how the babies died," Fitzhugh said. "Some just list 'anonymous,' or 'baby.' This could be a way for parents who are **trying to heal from abortion to remember their babies.**"

People can meditate and pray on the sidewalk benches encircling the garden. "One time, there was a whole family there, and they were all crying," Fitzhugh said. "Their baby who had birth defects had died after three months."

The memorials across the country are spiritually linked to the burial places of aborted children, Scheidler said. Crestlawn Memorial Park in Los Angeles is the resting place for five boxes of aborted babies that a driver dumped roadside in Chino, California. The 47 babies (some born alive) killed by abortionist Kermit Gosnell in Philadelphia are buried at the city's Laurel Hill Cemetery, and 16,433 aborted babies are buried at Odd Fellows Cemetery near Los

Angeles. "If there's not a burial place near you, you can visit a memorial and pray in mourning for the aborted children buried throughout the country, as well as the millions who were denied the dignity of a proper burial," Scheidler said. [Maryann Gogniat Eidemiller, *Our Sunday Visitor*, 1/22/2017]

Thousands Participate Around the Nation

Many people sympathetic to the pro-life cause do not go to the national March for Life, which was held this year on January 27. Instead, they participate in **regional events** closer to home, including the following: ● Walk for Life West Coast (Jan. 21) ● One Life L.A. (Jan. 21) ● March for Life Chicago (Jan. 15) ● March and Stand for Life Jacksonville (Jan. 23) ● North Texas March for Life (Jan. 14) ● March for Life St. Augustine (Jan. 14) ● Charlotte March and Mass for Life (Jan. 13) ● New Hampshire RTL March for Life (Jan. 14). [*National Catholic Register*, 1/22/17]

A Day of Prayer for Healing and Absolution was held at **St. Patrick's Cathedral**, NY, on the same day as the NY Women's March. Outside the Cathedral, Sisters of Life invited marchers to accept a red rose and invited them to place it at the Guadalupe Chapel. Many did and found peace, and some reportedly returned to church after being away for decades. What could have been a time of conflict turned into one of peace.

'Conscience in Residency' (CIR) Project Supports Pro-Life Doctors in Training

Negative reactions to pro-life beliefs were the inspiration behind the CIR project. Created and managed by a small group of residency students scattered across the country, web-based CIR provides a network for residents "who want to practice medicine according to logical, well-formed, evidence-based judgments." It also provides research on subjects such as contraception, sterilization, gender-identity and homosexuality, giving residents facts to rely on when they are challenged about their beliefs.

[Residency is] the most difficult period in becoming a physician," said Cara Buskmiller, an OB/GYN resident at St. Louis University, who supervises the website. "Residents are the bottom of the barrel," agreed Dr. Donna Harrison, executive director of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians & Gynecologists. "The laws in place right now have **no private right of action** [for residents]." Harrison urges support for the "Conscience Protection Act," which would give health care providers the ability to file a civil suit if they feel discriminated against for their beliefs. "What we desperately need is a **real protection of conscience**, in law, that says we have the right to conscientiously object to the taking of human life - and a private right of action," said Harrison.

85% of OB/GYNs do not perform abortions. "That's a very reassuring number," she said. "That tells me I am not in the minority; I am actually in the majority." [Elisabeth Deffner, *National Catholic Register*, 1/22/2017]