

REAL Women's Voices: Women Lobby in Washington

By Karen Cross & Elizabeth Maier

On April 26, pro-life women from around the country came to Washington, D.C. for this year's REAL Women's Voices Lobby Day. A diverse group of women, eager to lobby their United States Senators about pro-life issues, focused on the Child Custody Protection Act and the ban on human cloning. They traveled to Capitol Hill from 23 states-- from far and wide, even as distant as California, Wyoming, Maine, Florida, New York, Alabama, and Georgia. Women who were not able to make the trip to Washington, D.C. joined "in spirit" by having an issue advocate letter delivered to their Senators.

The exciting day started with a training breakfast on Capitol Hill, where attendees learned the do's-and-don'ts of lobbying. Kitty Martinez, wife of pro-life Senator Mel Martinez (R-Fl), encouraged the citizen-lobbyists with her opening remarks. She stressed the value of honing effective, noticeable lobbying techniques.

Douglas Johnson, Federal Legislative Director for National Right to Life, outlined the Child Custody Protection Act's legislative history. He used real-life accounts of minor daughters being taken across state lines to have abortions, in the process circumventing the child's home state parental notification laws.

Johnson urged the women to encourage pro-life senators to push for action on the bill in the near future. The House of Representatives passed its own version of parental notification legislation, the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act, last year.

David Christensen, Family Research Council Director of Congressional Affairs, discussed the differences between the authentic ban on human cloning, the Brownback-Landrieu bill, and the phony bans, including the Feinstein-Hatch bill.

The lobbyists-in-training were delighted to meet two sponsors of the anti-cloning bill: pro-life heroes Senator Sam Brownback(R-Ks), and Rep. Dave Weldon (R-Fl), who is also a physician.

Following the training breakfast, the women lobbyists met with Senators and their congressional staff on Capitol Hill. These real women urged their Senators to move to a vote the Child Custody Protection Act and the Brownback-Landrieu Ban on Human Cloning.

The day concluded with an afternoon reception in the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Pro-lifers Senator Rick Santorum (R-Pa), Congressman Alan Mollohan (D-WV) and Congresswoman Jean Schmidt (R-Ohio) credited pro-life women with many of the recent legislative successes.

REAL Women's Voices sponsors included the National Right to Life Committee, the Susan B. Anthony List, Concerned Women for America, Priests for Life, Eagle Forum, and Family Research Council Action.