

ONWARD, PRO-LIFE SOLDIERS!

By Wanda Franz, Ph.D.

It is the days after the election. The Senate and the House of Representatives are under the control of pro-abortion Democrats. And the Democratic Speaker of the House declares confidently on TV that the passage of the "Freedom of Choice Act" (FOCA) in the next congressional term is "a done deal." Worse, the president promises to sign the "Freedom of Choice Act..." But wait, that was the election of 1992.

After the 1992 election, pro-lifers faced the pro-abortion leadership's trifecta: Bill Clinton, the nation's first openly pro-abortion president; George Mitchell, the pro-abortion Democratic Majority Leader in the Senate; and Tom Foley, the pro-abortion Democratic Speaker of the House, who so confidently predicted the passage of the infernal FOCA bill.

The "Freedom of Choice Act" would have made unlimited abortion on demand a federal right—properly enacted by Congress and signed by the president. Charges that a phony "right" had been extra-constitutionally imposed by the Supreme Court's "legislating from the bench" in 1973 would have been moot. With the FOCA passed, it would have been all nice and legal, because "the people" would have spoken through their senators and representatives. And that would have been that. Except, it wasn't.

The FOCA never passed. And in 1994, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell abandoned his senatorial career, and Speaker Tom Foley lost his bid for re-election—"the first time a House speaker had been defeated in his home district since ... 1862" (The Almanac of American Politics - 2004).

Why did the FOCA never pass? Because, undeterred by the disappointing outcome of the 1992 election, NRLC embarked on a well-organized, tireless, and expensive campaign to defeat the diabolical FOCA—and we prevailed.

My point here is that we at NRLC and you, our supporters, cannot retreat into discouragement and disappointment just because some pro-life candidates lost at the ballot box in 2006. We have faced worse before.

One thing was new during the last election campaign: Heeding the lessons from previous national election defeats, the pro-abortion campaign leadership in the national Democratic Party recruited many candidates who were willing to advertise themselves as "moderate," "socially conservative," or, supposedly, "pro-life."

An article in the Wall Street Journal by Kimberley Strassel (11/11/2006) makes the point clear. Strassel reports on a long conversation with Senator Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), "the architect of the Democrats' Senate win," who recalls:

"I called Governor [X] and I said, 'Who is the best candidate?' ... And he said, 'Only one person can beat [Senator Y] but (a) he doesn't want to run and (b) you wouldn't want him to run if he did.' Well, I said, 'If he's the only one who can beat him, why wouldn't I want him to run?' And he said, 'Because he's pro-life.'" Mr. Schumer pauses here, to make sure the next part is

clear. "I said, 'Governor, the days are over when a Democrat has to check 28 boxes before they get our support.' So we actively recruited him, and once he entered, he was never behind." The New Yorker, here, looks pleased as punch.

Whether the newly elected senator will vote and actively work for pro-life legislation is uncertain. At best, the episode describes a slight loosening of the abortion lobby's grip on the national Democratic Party leadership. At worst, it represents a cynical bait-and-switch maneuver by ardent pro-abortionists (like Schumer): vote for this "social conservative," we'll make him vote like a pro-abortion Democrat later—especially when it's time to approve candidates for the Supreme Court.

Aside from this change in tactics on the part of the Democratic strategists, NRL PAC faced the additional obstacle of being vastly outspent by the pro-abortionists. For example, EMILY's List, a group that only supports pro-abortion Democratic women candidates, had over \$30 million to spend for political advertising and get-out-the-vote efforts. And that doesn't include the money spent by other pro-abortion groups.

In spite of NRL PAC's serious financial disadvantage, a nationwide poll tells us that NRL PAC's message was heard and seen by 22% of the electorate. The poll also showed that candidates profited from taking the pro-life stance. Thirty-six percent of the total sample said that the abortion issue influenced their vote: 23% of the total sample voted for candidates opposing abortion, while only 13% voted for candidates favoring abortion. Thus, the pro-life voting advantage was as strong as ever, but in many races other issues neutralized or diminished it.

A sober look at the election results tells us some important things. Obviously, the pro-life side must raise significant amounts of money for educating the public on the central importance of the right-to-life issue. The billionaires and millionaires who have given their support to various radical groups pushing abortion are unlikely to retreat now. They have tasted success. They want more.

We may never match the other side in fundraising; but we must, at a minimum, encourage a large number of people of moderate means to support us with donations for NRLC's educational and legislative work. Even a small donation makes the donor a stake holder in something important and significant. And then this pro-life donor wants to see success—like the pro-abortion millionaire.

We must identify those who share our pro-life convictions and "invite them in." And in our chapters we must organize and work. We must coordinate these activities with NRLC in order to multiply the grassroots efforts and transform them into cohesive national action—just as we did when we beat back the FOCA.

Our cause is just, and we must hold our heads high. The right-to-life issue is not the only issue, it is the most important issue! We are not passionate about something trivial, nor is our right-to-life work focused on securing material advantages for ourselves. Instead, we are committing ourselves to an enormous amount of work and sacrifice for the sake of someone else: the unborn, the disabled, and those threatened by euthanasia.

That is our burden—our freely chosen burden. On our side is the Author of Life who will make our yoke light.