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House fails to block funds to Planned Parenthood

by Nancy Frazier O'Brien by Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON -- An effort to withhold U.S. family planning funds from Planned Parenthood of America failed in the House of Representatives July 24 by a vote of 183 in favor and 247 opposed.

Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., had proposed the amendment to the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill for fiscal year 2010. The bill passed later that day by a vote of 264-153.

"The largest abortion provider in America should not also be the largest recipient of federal funding under Title X, as I believe a majority of the American people would attest," Pence said in remarks on the House floor July 24. "The time has come to deny all federal funding to Planned Parenthood of America."

Title X of the Public Health Services Act provides federal grants to programs that provide comprehensive family planning and related preventive health care services.

Pence noted that current law and regulations prohibit the use of Title X money to directly fund abortions. "But there's no question that money that Planned Parenthood receives for its operational expenses from the federal government frees up resources that can be used to provide and promote abortions through its abortion clinics," he said. "Common sense teaches no other idea."

In a statement after the vote on his amendment, Pence said he would "continue to fight for the right to life and for the day when abortions are not funded by the federal government," adding that "taxpayers and the just cause for the unborn deserve no less."

Also speaking in favor of the Pence amendment on the House floor was Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., a Catholic who co-chairs the Congressional Pro-Life Caucus.

"Millions of children live today because public funds weren't available to effectuate their death," Smith

said. "Yet Planned Parenthood aggressively seeks to compel taxpayer funds for abortion. ... It's time to understand the irreversible harm Planned Parenthood is doing to the children of America -- born and unborn."

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