

N.Y. Catholics hail defeat of abortion plank in women's equality bill

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The New York State Senate rejected the abortion-related plank of a 10-point women's equality bill, prompting the New York State Catholic Conference to call the action a "remarkable victory for unborn children."

The Catholic conference called the provision the "Abortion Expansion Act." Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who labeled it the "Reproductive Health Act," said the language would merely have codified current abortion rights into law, but pro-lifers warned in their campaign against the measure that it would have opened the door to more late-term abortions.

The Catholic conference termed it "the most radical expansion of abortion since the state legalized it in 1970."

What transpired in the state Legislature is, "quite literally, the answer to prayer," the Catholic conference said in a statement Friday. "More accurately, it is the answer to millions of prayers by men, women and children of every faith from every section of the state who believe in the inalienable right to life of the baby in the womb."

The Women's Equality Act, with all 10 provisions intact, easily passed the Democratic-led state Assembly. Although the state Senate has a slight Democratic majority, two Democrats joined the Republicans in the Senate to vote against the abortion provision in the bill.

One senator tried to attach the abortion plank to a medical-related bill, but that effort failed by one vote.

"The movement to pass this bill awoke a sleeping giant, a silent pro-life majority that had been discouraged and disheartened from living in the state with the highest abortion rate in the country," the state Catholic conference statement said.

"The powerful lobbyists for the abortion industry already are vowing to wage this battle again next year, and to punish legislators at the polls who dare stand up for both the dignity of women and the right to life of innocent children in the womb," it continued. "We believe this effort will fall short, too, because the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers, including those who say they are 'pro-choice,' are disgusted by late-term abortion and are shocked that abortion clinics would seek to employ non-doctors to perform surgical procedures on women and girls."

The conference added: "We will continue to stand up for innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death, and we continue to pray for our opponents that their eyes may be opened to the evil of abortion."

The abortion votes came at the scheduled close of the legislative session. However, some have suggested that members of the Assembly return to Albany to vote on the Women's Equality Act without the abortion provision. Among the remaining nine points are provisions on sexual harassment, domestic violence and human trafficking.

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