

# Baptists battle to protect pro-life regulations

by Tom Strode

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission is attempting to inform lawmakers of its support of the pro-life family-planning rules it says are in danger of being overturned in Congress.

The CLC sent a letter to all U.S. senators and representatives last week, urging them to oppose attempts to set aside pro-life regulations in the federal family-planning program, known as Title X.

A day later, the CLC mailed a church bulletin insert encouraging Southern Baptists to contact Congress and the president to ask their support of Title X's pro-life rules.

The bulletin insert was included in a special mailing of SALT, the CLC's new publication focusing on Southern Baptist interests in Washington.

The CLC is devoting such energy to the issue for two reasons, said Executive Director Richard Land.

"First, the principle involved—that

they're asking pro-life people to support pro-abortion counseling through the use of their tax money, which is unconscionable," he said.

"Second, the upholding of the Title X regulations (by the Supreme Court) was a significant victory for the pro-life movement.

"If Planned Parenthood and their pro-abortion fellow travelers are able to reverse this through a combination of a multimillion-dollar media campaign and the distortion of the issue as a 'free speech' issue, which it is not, then the pro-life coalition in Congress is seriously undermined, and it portends yet worse things in the very near future. "It is serious."

Since 1988, the Title X rules have prohibited clinics from doing abortion counseling, promotion and referrals as a part of their family-planning programs. The regulations were not enforced in most states because of court battles.

The Supreme Court, however, upheld the regulations in the May decision of the

Rust v. Sullivan case.

Since the ruling, pro-choice members of Congress, as well as groups such as Planned Parenthood, have worked to convince the House of Representatives and Senate to overturn the regulations.

On July 18, the Senate passed a bill by Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., removing the prohibition on abortion counseling. Earlier, the House included language in an appropriations measure negating the regulations by withholding money needed by the Department of Health and Human Services to enforce the rules.

In his letter, Land warned the senators and representatives: "No member of Congress may vote to overturn or in any way change the Title X regulations and be regarded by the CLC as having a pro-life position.

"No matter what the proponents of overturning the Title X regulations say, these votes are about abortion, and we will see to it that our constituency understands that this debate is about abortion." (BP)