

Christian Coalition's leader denies shift on abortion issue

◦ New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — Ralph Reed, the executive director of the Christian Coalition, yesterday tried to dispel any impression that he is out of step with other leaders of the anti-abortion movement, angrily dismissing as "totally inaccurate" a story in The New York Times saying he would accept changes in the party's platform.

The Christian Coalition said the article in The Times yesterday "inaccurately states" that Reed "would be willing to accept rape and incest exceptions as a possible change in the wording of the pro-life plank of the Republican Party's platform."

In an interview Friday for the article, Reed said he would accept changes in the party platform, without specifying the changes.

Reed also said in the interview that he would accept a compromise on a law banning abortions — not the platform. Later, he objected to the article's characterization of the circumstances under which he would do so.

The Times article did not clearly draw a distinction between language



Ralph Reed

"Conservatives must shun harsh language."

in the party platform, language in possible anti-abortion legislation and language in a proposed constitutional amendment outlawing abortion.

Yesterday Reed said the Christian Coalition favors an exception to an abortion ban only if the mother's life is endangered. In the interview Friday, Reed had said he would "reluctantly" accept exceptions in cases of rape and incest if that were the only way to get an anti-abortion law passed.

In one edition yesterday The Times incorrectly reported that Reed said he would reluctantly support those exceptions in a constitutional amend-

ment that banned abortion.

Reed called The Times after its early editions to say he had referred only to laws, not to an amendment.

Although he acknowledged that he was repeatedly asked about exceptions to an amendment, he said his answers applied only to legislation. He said it is "too hypothetical" to discuss what an amendment might say. In later editions, the article was revised to reflect Reed's statements about legislation.

In excerpts from his new book that Newsweek magazine announced it would publish this week, Reed lays out what he calls "my effort at a pro-life plank," which includes changes that other anti-abortion leaders harshly condemned Friday as unacceptable.

Further, according to the magazine, Reed calls for a more compassionate approach to major issues of social conservatives. "Religious conservatives must shun harsh language on critical issues — chiefly abortion, Clinton-bashing and homosexuality — and learn to speak of our opponents with charity," he writes in the book, "Active Faith."