

Poll shows disapproval of Obama's Mexico City policy reversal

WASHINGTON - Although a majority of Americans support many of President Barack Obama's early actions in office, only about a third back his decision to allow funding for overseas family planning groups that provide abortions, according to a new poll by USA Today/Gallup.

The results of the survey conducted Jan. 30-Feb. 1 show that "this is no time to divide our nation with policies that offend the pro-life values of most Americans," said Deirdre McQuade, assistant director for policy and communications for the U.S. bishops' Office of Pro-Life Activities, in a Feb. 3 statement.

Asked about seven actions taken by Obama as president, the majority said they approved of his moves to:

- Name special envoys for the Middle East and for Afghanistan and Pakistan (76 percent).
- Tighten ethics rules for administration officials (76 percent).
- Limit interrogation techniques used on prisoners (74 percent).
- Institute higher fuel efficiency standards (74 percent).
- Make it easier for workers to sue for pay discrimination (66 percent).

But only 44 percent said they supported Obama's decision to order that the Guantanamo Bay prison be closed and only 35 percent were in favor of his decision to reverse the Mexico City policy, a ban on federal funding of abortion-providing groups abroad that was first instituted by President Ronald Reagan in 1984.

Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, called the reversal "very disappointing."

"Most Americans seem to agree" with the cardinal, McQuade said. "An administration that wants to reduce abortions should not divert U.S. funds to groups that perform and promote abortion."

The margin of error for the poll by USA Today/Gallup was plus or minus 3 percentage points.