

Pro-life lawmakers urge end to federal funds to abortion providers

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., led other pro-life lawmakers in the House in calling for Congress to end federal funds for Planned Parenthood and other family planning organizations that provide abortions.

The lawmakers were allowed an hour on the House floor July 9 to make their comments.

“Most Americans, I suspect, probably have no idea whatsoever that our tax dollars have enabled abortionists to establish and to run hundreds and hundreds of abortion mills throughout America,” said Smith, a Catholic.

“America’s biggest abortion chain is Planned Parenthood,” he said. “Each year, approximately 290,000 children are aborted in Planned Parenthood clinics. Each year, Planned Parenthood gets more than \$335 million in taxpayer funds, including huge amounts from the Department of Health and Human Services’ Title X program.”

Last year Planned Parenthood received \$336.7 million in government funds, about one-third of its \$926.4 million budget. The federal grants and contracts included Title X family planning funds for low-income people.

Federal regulations require abortion services be kept separate from Title X-funded family planning services, but critics of Planned Parenthood say that receiving funding for nonabortion services frees up its resources for providing abortions.

Planned Parenthood did not immediately return a call from Catholic News Service seeking comment.

In late June a House appropriations subcommittee passed a measure that provides \$315 million for Title X as part of a spending bill for the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education departments for fiscal year 2009. The full Appropriations Committee has not voted on the measure. The Senate is expected to take up its

version of the measure in August.

Among the 10 lawmakers joining Smith was Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., sponsor of the Title X Abortion Provider Prohibition Act to defund Planned Parenthood. It has been in the House Committee on Energy and Commerce since last November.

Pence urged House members to support his bill. "Organizations like Planned Parenthood claim to work to reduce abortions, but ironically they remain the top abortion provider in the country," he said.

In his remarks Smith said a disproportionate number of African-American and Hispanic women get abortions and that according to a 2005 study, about 70 percent of Planned Parenthood abortion clinics are in African-American and Hispanic communities.

He quoted Alveda King, niece of the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., as saying that "defending human life is part of the civil rights struggle."

Smith, Pence and other pro-life lawmakers met with King June 27 on Capitol Hill. She and other pro-lifers and African-American leaders held a rally to protest federal funding of Planned Parenthood.

Sherly Jourdain was at the rally holding a sign that read, "Stop targeting my community." She said that "the black community and America in general does not know the truth about Planned Parenthood."