Abortion factions eye candidates

By DOUG MYERS
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Responding to comments indicating all candidates for governor would sign anti-abortion legislation with three exceptions, leaders on opposite ends of the issue Tuesday said they plan campaigns "to educate" the public.

While most seeking Louisiana's top post said in recent interviews that they would veto a bill that would ban abortions except to save the life of the mother, all the candidates said they would sign into law bills with exceptions for rape, incest and when the mother's life is threatened.

The candidates' sentiments did not please either anti-abortion leaders who want strict laws allowing abortions only to save the mother's life or pro-choice leaders who would like the state to forget the issue altogether.

Calling the candidates' opinions "truly politics Louisiana style," Terri Bartlett — executive director of Planned Parenthood of Louisiana and a pro-choice leader — said her group plans to direct its efforts toward the gubernatorial candidates.

"They at least now know that we don't want to ban all abortions," Bartlett said. "And now we've got to continue to talk to them about the fact that really we don't want them to waste our time and money making abortions illegal.

"They've all been looking at the same polls, but they just haven't looked at all of them because they still don't believe polls that say that a majority of the people in this state believe that women should be trusted."

"It's an education process and we'll go forward with it," said Sandy McDade, co-chairman of the anti-abortion Eagle Forum, which favors "no exceptions" legislation. "It really doesn't disturb me."

In the survey, Gov. Buddy Roemer, Kenner Mayor Aaron Broussard, former Gov. Edwin Edwards, Public Service Commissioner Louis Lambert and Franklin Mayor Sam Jones indicated they would veto a bill that would allow abortions only to save the life of the mother and would sign into law bills with the three exceptions.


While the extremes on the abortion issue plan to drive "educate" the governor candidates, a group promoting an abortion ban with rape, incest and life of the mother exceptions — the Louisiana Right-to-Life Federation — does not expect the candidates to sway.

Sharon Fontenot, a lobbyist for the Louisiana Right-to-Life Federation, said she is delighted because the candidates' public statements correspond to what they tell their group.

That is why her group has worked with state Sen. Allen Bureau, D-Lafayette, and state Rep. Sam Theriot, D-Abbeville, has introduced legislation with the three exceptions, Fontenot said.

Despite representations from the "no exceptions" faction in the anti-abortion movement that the three exceptions bill would allow "abortion on demand," Fontenot said the proposed law would effectively ban abortion "because you certainly wouldn't have abortion clinics thriving from rape and incest victims."

Louisiana currently has no substantive law prohibiting abortion or advertising abortion services. Laws on the books setting imprisonment at hard labor for performing abortions and other penalties for advertising abortion services and abortion drugs have been found unconstitutional by the courts.

An unemancipated, unmarried minor under 18 may not obtain an abortion without a notarized statement of consent from one of her parents. The minor may obtain an abortion without parental consent only by securing a court order.