Pro-lifers put anti-abortion bills aside

By DOUG MYERS
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A divided pro-life community came together Monday to announce that no proposals will be pushed during the 1993 Legislature to ban, limit or regulate abortions.

The announcement by state Reps. Louis "Woody" Jenkins, D-Baton Rouge, and Sam Theriot, D-Abbeville, culminated weeks of discussion among pro-lifers in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to review the state's struck-down anti-abortion law.

It also turned the state's attention to Washington, D.C., where Congress is considering a proposal that would prevent states from adopting abortion laws more stringent than the limits set out in Roe vs. Wade, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized most abortions.

Jenkins and Theriot said the Legislature will be asked to adopt a resolution urging federal lawmakers and President Clinton to strike down the proposed Freedom of Choice Act.


"If that does pass, everything else is moot," he said.

The camps of Theriot and Jenkins had differed in recent weeks on how to best attack abortion in 1993.

Now, Theriot said, "We find ourselves in accord and reunited."

Jenkins' camp had maintained anything short of banning abortions would be condoning the killing of the unborn and sending the "wrong message" to the people of Louisiana and abortion clinics themselves.

Theriot's camp had been open to the idea of "chipping away" at abortion after the U.S. Supreme Court recently killed Lou...
They warned that the legislature was poised to enact stringent new abortion laws, despite a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that struck down a similar law in 1990. The Court's decision in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, which struck down a Missouri law that restricted abortion access, set a precedent that Louisiana lawmakers were seeking to follow.

The two sessions in the pre-Roe era had already been marked by high-stakes debates over abortion, with lawmakers and advocates on both sides vying for influence on the issue. The 1990 Legislature, which was dominated by conservative lawmakers, was particularly contentious, with battles over abortion legislation that drew national attention.

Despite the opposition, the legislature passed a bill that would have made it more difficult for women to obtain abortions, but it was ultimately struck down by the state's highest court. The Court's decision was seen as a major victory for pro-choice advocates and a setback for those seeking to restrict abortion access.

The legislature's efforts continued in the post-Roe era, with lawmakers passing a series of restrictive laws that were challenged in federal court. The Court struck down many of these laws, but others were upheld, leading to ongoing legal battles over abortion rights in Louisiana.