Anti-abortion forces gear

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Anti-abortion forces will spend $20,000 on newspaper advertisements to attack Gov. Buddy Roemer's demand that exceptions for rape and incest be placed in an abortion bill moving through the Louisiana Legislature.

The idea for the ads running Sunday and Monday is to muster as much support possible before Tuesday's abortion debate in the Louisiana Senate, Rep. Woody Jenkins said Friday.

Roemer's forces are expected to try add exceptions to the bill during the floor fight, said Jenkins, D-Baton Rouge.

Jenkins is the author of the bill. He said money for the newspaper ads was raised in the past few days by Eagle Forum, a conservative lobbying group. He said the ads will run in all but one daily newspaper in the state.

"We won't run it in Lafayette because we don't need to," he said.

Lafayette is the center of Acadiana, a Roman Catholic stronghold of anti-abortionists.

Sen. Mike Cross, D-Baton Rouge, who will handle the legislation in the Senate, said he discussed the issue with Roemer, who has pledged to veto any bill that doesn't include exceptions.

"We talked about rape and incest exceptions for the first trimester," Cross said. "I explained to the governor that that is abortion on demand. He knows that 80 percent or more of abortions performed today are done in the first trimester and that all a woman would have to do is go to the local law enforcement agency and say, 'I was raped,' get a copy of the report she gave, bring it to the abortionist and have an abortion on demand. The state would have to prove she wasn't raped if they wanted to convict the abortionist.

There are too many loopholes.

"The ads will include "the facts" about the loopholes in such exceptions, said Jenkins.

Jenkins, who supported Roemer in the 1987 campaign, also said he is "personally offended" by what he called the governor's stance on abortion.

He said he told Roemer in 1987 that he would attempt legislation aimed at overturning the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling that gave women abortion rights.

"He said, "Woody, I'll sign anything you send me,"" Jenkins said.

Jenkins also circulated copies of a letter sent in 1980 to a Shreveport constituent by Roemer, who was a congressman at the time.

"I can no longer in good conscience support the potential loophole represented by the rape and incest exception," the letter said.

Roemer, acknowledging to reporters later that he sent the letter, said, "That was 19 years ago and my judgment has changed since then. The bill without exceptions is unfair to the mother and it's too restrictive."

As for Jenkins' contention that the governor promised to sign anything sent to him, "I do not recall such a commitment," Cross expressed confidence he will get a bill to the governor's desk without exceptions.

If the governor follows through with his threat, the bill's backers will try to override the veto.

A two-thirds vote in each house is needed to override a veto.

No governor has been the victim of an override this century, according to legislative researchers.

Earlier in the day, Roemer said he now is active in personally lobbying senators and there is "movement" toward accepting exceptions.