Abortion
bill heads for veto

By DOUG MYERS

Gov. Buddy Roemer and Rep. Louis "Woody" Jenkins met behind closed doors for 45 minutes Wednesday afternoon but failed to reach an
agreement on what sort of anti-abortion law Louisiana should have.

The two self-proclaimed "pro-life" politicians agreed to disagree,
so Jenkins' stringent abortion ban bill now is headed for Roemer's veto
and possible demise.

The Legislature has never overridden a governor's veto since the old
state constitution was reworked and approved in 1921.

After Jenkins met with Roemer, the House, with relatively little
debate, voted 78-23 to concur with Senate amendments made Tuesday
to clarify the law abortion exception in Jenkins' bill - when the life of the
mother is in jeopardy.

And, for the second time Wednesday, Roemer proclaimed he
would court his threat to veto HB1637 because it does not include
exceptions for rape and incest.

Under state law, if Roemer receives Jenkins' bill before Saturday, the
governor will have 19 days in which to veto it. The session ends in 13
days.

Jenkins wants to take a veto decision before the July 9 end of the
departing anti-abortion forces can try to override the veto.

Roemer indicated Wednesday he has no intention of holding the bill
the entire 19 days.

"I'd like to give them a chance (to veto override) while they're here," Roemer
said. "There's no use coming back to do that."

The House and Senate will each need a two-thirds vote to override
Roemer's veto. That's 79 votes in the House and 26 votes in the Senate.

Roemer remained confident Jenkins' bill does not have enough votes
to override his veto.

Gov. Buddy Roemer reiterates his pledge to veto an anti-abortion bill and announces coastal
restoration projects during a press conference Wednesday

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"I think (Tuesday in the Senate) there
were 15 votes against the bill, and there
are at least six other senators who
would probably not override the veto," Roemer said, referring to the 24-15 Senate
vote. "So I would suspect the
votes would be 15 or higher to sustain a veto.
Jenkins refused to predict what might happen.

We've been unable to predict that all along the way," Jenkins said. "It's a
looked difficult and possible at every
stage, but we're going to keep working
because we cannot agree to abortion on
demand, and we're going to keep
standing up for the rights of these 13,000
unborn children that are being killed
every year here in Louisiana.

House debate on concurring with the Senate
amendments was relatively
short as proponents of the rape and
incest exceptions tried to persuade the
House to reject the Senate changes and
send the bill to a House-Senate
conference committee.

"There is no way in my heart and in
my mind" that the bill would become
law without those exceptions, said Rep.
Robert Adley, D-Bossier City.

However, Rep. Carl Gautier, D-
Pineville, said he believes incest is a
valid reason for an abortion.

"When I got to thinking, the way we
got thoroughbred horses and
thoroughbred dogs is through
inbreeding," Gautier said. "Maybe
we would get a superb-skyd kid. Somebody
ought to go to the pen for that (incest),
but someone else (the fetus) shouldn't
die.

Many legislators shook their heads or
covered their faces at Gautier's
remarks.

Following his meeting with Jenkins,
Roemer stuck to his guns, saying
exceptions for rape and incest are
necessary for Jenkins' HB1637 to
escape his veto.

Jenkins countered, saying, "There
are no exceptions to right to life.

At an impromptu news conference
after the meeting with Jenkins, Roemer
said most Louisiana citizens want
abortion exceptions for the victims of
violent crimes.

"I mean, frankly, Woody and his team
are willing to go forward with a bill that
didn't even protect the life of the
mother," Roemer said. "So, I just
don't see any resolution right now at this
late date, and the bill is in Woody's court.
And it's his choice not to take it. He's got
to rest with that.

Jenkins said Roemer is "intent on
toiling this bill," and promised to seek
an override if the veto occurs.

"What we're talking about here is
his insistence that we start creating
exceptions that will be big enough to
allow abortion on demand in this state,
and we just can't agree to it," Jenkins
said.

Wielding a copy of a 1973 U.S.
congressional joint resolution, Jenkins
pointed out that Roemer co-authored
the resolution, which promoted abortion
only when the life of the mother was
threatened. Roemer was campaigning
for governor at the time.

"If he (Roemer) was strong enough
for abortion co-author this legislation
prohibiting all abortions in the United
States, he ought to be pro-life enough to
sign this bill that we've passed here in
Louisiana," Jenkins said.

"Look, I admit to being a human being
and to grow over time," Roemer said. "I
can admit that. If that's a weakness, there
is it.

"I have consistently felt that the pro-
life spirit was the right one. The
problem is what should the law be, and
the law should not be this absolutism
with no exceptions

"So, they can do all they want to. I've
been consistent in calling myself pro-
life, and I've been consistent in my life
growing, understanding other people
growing to be compassionate. That's
where we are."

Here is how the House voted 78-23
Wednesday to concur with Senate
amendments to Jenkins' HB1637.

FOR concurring with amendments
(78) - Speaker Dixon and Reps.
Accardo, Actaul, Albrit, A. Alexander,
R. Alexander, Anding, Amard, Bella,
Beauv, Bradley, Brou, Caim, Carrier,
Carier, Castillo, Damico, DeWitt, Diaz,
Donelon, Dowser, Duke, Elliotton,
Euninger, Forster, Garry, Gadain,
Gee, Gadrey, Gunter, Gueard, Haik,
Hand, Hebert, Heimester, Herrig,
Hopen, Iven, Jackson, Jenkins, Jemison,
John, Kennard, Kimball, Labert, Lalo,
Lancaster, Leblanc, Lemoine, Martin,
McClary, McFerren, Melanson, Miller,
Montgomery, Odinet, Orr, Patl, Roach,
St. Raymond, Scogin, Siracusa, Estig,
A.D. Smith, Sauer, Stelly, Sline, Strain, S.H. Theriot, S.J.
Theriot, Thomas, Thompson, Tronty,
Travis, Triche, Valentine, Waddell and
Winter.

AGAINST concurring with
amendments (25) - Reps. Adley, Ailer,
Burge, Bajon, Brou, Brassas,
Copelin, Dastugue, Deano, Delpe,
Dixon, Glover, Holden, Irvin, C.D.
Jones, C.R. Jones, Landrieu, Long,
Morrell, Relfly, Salier, Slaughter, A.J.
Smith, J.H. Smith and Warren.

NOT VOTING (2) - Reps. Crane and
Higginbotham.