Pro-choice forces say new measure flawed; anti-abortion side subdued

By John Laplante
and Doug Myers

Supporters of a strict anti-abortion law were subdued Friday evening

about the passage of a compromise measure, but pro-choice advocates

confidently predicted a quick out for what they called a grossly

flawed bill.

Anti-abortion forces have been building for an outright ban on

abortion in Louisiana, except to save the life of the mother.

Most of the anti-abortion forces — bolstered and euphoric earlier in

the day — left the State Capitol quietly after lawmakers passed a

compromise allowing exceptions for rape and incest.

The measure might not amount to much of a ban at all, said Sandra

Marcello of Eagle Forum, a group that espouses conservative family

values.

"That's a little bit untrue at this point," Marcello said. "I don't believe the

ramifications of it are as bad as they seemed to be.

It appears that "All you have to do is claim you were raped" to get an

abortion under the compromise tested to Louisiana's desk.

But Marcello said she was pretty sure what the bill didn't concern anti-

abortion forces didn't have time to digest, the amendments that were

quickly tacked on an earlier bill and approved by the House and Senate.

"This all just flew over in a stampede. It's hard to say what the

legislation means," she said.

Pro-choice advocates said the measure was so deeply connected that

the courts, even state courts, likely will throw it out without even

considering the merit of the abortion issue itself.

For instance, the abortion provisions were added to a measure

regarding battery laws.

Abortion "is now called simple battery," but that crime, by definition,

is committed by use of force with the intent, such as a punch, while

abortion involves the use of instruments, said Leslie Gerwin, legal adviser to the

pro-choice coalition.

The penalty also is unconstitutionally severe, Gerwin said.
Reaction

Since when is a single battery ever been permitted to kill innocent people and a $15,000 fine?" Green said.

"This bill does not even make constitutional sense. It has no basis of constitutional law."

Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health.

"If the death penalty was the only solution, it would be the only solution." Sebelius said.

"In the past, the death penalty was used as a last resort to curb violence."

Sebelius added, "But the principles of justice have changed."

"The death penalty is a symbol of our society's failure to deal with crime."

Sebelius concluded, "We must find other ways to address crime."