

WASHINGTON WATCH®

From defending marriage to fighting to prevent the killing of the unborn late in pregnancy to presenting an unprecedented balanced budget with family tax relief, the 104th Congress took historic steps for America's families, according to Family Research Council President Gary Bauer.

Missions Met

To be sure, the 104th Congress did not achieve all of its objectives. But the addition of a large group of conservative freshmen substantially changed the legislative agenda. These freshmen apparently had an impact on national policy even before they took office. On Nov. 10, 1994—two days after the election that reversed control of Congress—the Justice Department abandoned its two-year effort to weaken the interpretation of a child pornography statute. According to a new book by former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, the election results also prompted the administration to reverse a decision to provide clean needles to drug addicts.

The new chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Rep. Charles Canady (R-Fla.), was in the forefront of congressional initiatives to defend the traditional definition of marriage and ban partial-birth abortions. Canady held very illuminating hearings in his subcommittee, helping to set the stage for overwhelming House approval of the Defense of Marriage Act and the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban.

Sen. Don Nickles (R-Okla.), the Senate sponsor of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), fended off an effort by Sens. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and others to attach the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and other pro-homosexual amendments to DOMA. The Human Rights Campaign, a major homosexual rights advocacy group, took credit for developing this amendment strategy to

CONGRESS ADVANCES PRO- FAMILY AGENDA

“derail” the Defense of Marriage Act, which they alleged was “hate-driven.” Nickles and Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) negotiated an agreement that provided for a clean vote on DOMA, followed by an up or down vote on Sen. Kennedy’s ENDA proposal.

An overwhelming majority of senators agreed with the argument that marriage was not instituted to “discriminate” against homosexuals, but rather to unite one man and one woman and

“THE 104TH CONGRESS TOOK HISTORIC STEPS.”

provide a strong foundation for the nurturing of children. President Clinton signed DOMA into law at 12:50 a.m. on Sept. 21. Despite last-minute phone calls from the president to wavering senators, the Kennedy homosexual jobs proposal came up one vote short, 49–50.

Congress produced strong majorities in favor of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban, but on Sept. 26 the Senate

fell eight votes short of the two-thirds majority necessary to override a veto. Despite administration objections, Congress did succeed in enacting five pro-life provisions as amendments to spending bills. One of these measures protects medical schools from the loss of federal funds if they refuse to provide abortion training. Another restores a limitation on funding of abortions through federal employees’ health insurance programs.

More Vetoes

Several new anti-pornography bills were enacted and signed into law by the president, but they will face difficult battles in the courts. Congress passed a balanced budget and family tax relief package, but it was vetoed. A modified welfare reform package was enacted into law after stronger measures were twice vetoed.

Line-item veto authority was provided to the president, effective January 1997. Vice President Gore suggested on a weekend news program that this would give the administration leverage to press Congress to liberalize welfare policies.

Since every new Congress starts with a clean slate, the policies enacted during the past two years will be subject to revision by the next Congress and president.

Whose Children Are They?

Parents, have you encountered incidents where your rights to parent your children have been infringed upon, at schools or elsewhere? Please send all stories to the attention of FRC congressional liaison Jacqueline Halbig, who is compiling these incidents as part of a research project. (For FRC’s new address, see p. 4.)

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