NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Study: woman, family support linked to abortion rate drop

Tom Roberts | Aug. 27, 2008

A study of the effects of public policy on abortion rates during the past two decades shows that providing social and economic supports for women and family contributes to a significant reduction in abortions, according to Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good.

The group, founded in 2005 and dedicated to ?promoting awareness of the Catholic social tradition? said the findings should provide common ground for both Republicans and Democrats interested in reducing the rate of abortion in the United States.

The study was released Aug. 27 in Denver during a town hall meeting sponsored by Democrats for Life of America.

According to the study, a recent survey of women who obtained abortions showed that nearly 75 percent ?cited economic hardship as a reason for obtaining an abortion; three-fourths also cited having a child as interfering with work or school, or child care responsibilities as a reason.?

Little was known, however, about ?how economic policies aimed at supporting low-income mothers and working families affect the abortion rate,? according to the study.

The study, conducted by Joseph Wright, a political science professor at Penn State University and a visiting fellow at the University of Notre Dame, and Michael Bailey, a professor of American government at Georgetown University, found that assistance to families and access to employment correlated to significantly lower rates of abortion.

A copy of the full study is available here as a pdf file: **Reducing Abortion in America: The Effect of Economic and Social Supports** [1]

Alexia Kelley, executive director of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, said in a news release that the data could provide direction for Republican and Democratic policy makers. ?Too often our abortion debate has been used to score political points by both sides, rather than to identify what kinds of public policies will actually prevent and reduce abortions in America. This data shows that policy-makers on both sides of the aisle have a moral imperative to enact legislation that provides economic and social supports for vulnerable women and families in order to reduce abortions,? she said.

?Being pro-life is not just a slogan,? she said. ?It requires concrete programs and public policies that help women and families with robust economic and social supports. Both political parties can agree to unite behind comprehensive strategies that reduce abortions.?

In studying public policy in all states from 1982 to 2000, the authors found that programs not normally associated with reducing abortions had a noted effect on the rate of abortion from one state to another.

For instance, the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 allowed states to impose a cap on the number of children eligible to receive economic assistance in low-income families. The study found that removing the cap did not increase fertility rates. Instead, according to the study, removing the cap ?would decrease abortions by about 15 percent or 150,000 nationwide.?

Similarly, the findings ?suggest? that during the 1990s ?states with more generous grants to women infants and children under the age of 5 ? had a 37 percent lower abortion rate? and that higher male employment during that decade ?was associated with a 29 percent lower abortion rate.?

The study was sparked by the ?observation that the number of abortions in the United States decreased dramatically during the 1990s.? Two major studies estimated that the number fell between 18 percent and 21 percent during the 90s, representing ?over 300,000 fewer abortions in 2000 compared with 1990.?

?This new research suggests that the Pregnant Women?s Support Act is exactly the kind of sound public policy that can lead to lowering the abortion rate in America,? said Kristen Day, Executive Director of Democrats for Life, referring to legislation in Congress aimed at reducing the abortion rate. ?This discussion will prove that hope and change are possible in Washington if we focus on creating solutions based on shared values,? she said.

(Roberts is NCR *news director. His e-mail address is* troberts@ncronline.org.)

Source URL (retrieved on *11/30/2015 - 13:03*): http://ncronline.org/news/politics/study-woman-family-support-linked-abortion-rate-drop

Links:
[1] http://ncronline3.org/drupal/miscimages/dailyphotos/abortion_study.pdf