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Bill on sex-selection abortion fails to get needed two-thirds in House

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WASHINGTON -- A bill that would have prohibited abortions motivated by the gender of the unborn child failed Thursday to gain a needed two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives.

The vote to suspend the rules and pass the Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act, sponsored by Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., and known as PRENDA, was 246 in favor and 168 against.

In addition to banning sex-selection abortions, the legislation would have prohibited the coercion of abortions based on gender, the solicitation or acceptance of funds for such abortions and the transportation of a woman into the U.S. to obtain such an abortion.

In a statement after the vote, Franks expressed confidence that "this is not the end, but merely the opening salvo in ensuring the words, 'It's a girl,' are no longer a death sentence for so many unborn girls."

Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., said sex-selection abortion "is cruel, it's discriminatory and it's legal. It is violence against women."

"Most people in government are unaware that it is part of a deliberate plan of population control," added Smith, who co-chairs the Congressional Pro-Life Caucus. "This is a real war on women."

The bill was proposed after undercover video by the group Live Action showed Planned Parenthood staff members advising a woman on how to get an abortion if the child she is carrying is female.

Currently only four U.S. states -- Arizona, Illinois, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania -- ban sex-selection abortions. They also are prohibited in Canada, the United Kingdom and several Asian countries.

A spokeswoman for the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said the USCCB has taken no formal position on the Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act.

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