

Editorial: 'Pro-abortion'

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

We sincerely appreciate hearing from readers who value the forum of letters to the editor. It is a place where, though we want to keep comment fair, even hyperbole has a place to land.

Such was the case Saturday in a letter to the editor. Charles Estrada of Waco criticized leaders at Sacred Heart Catholic Church and St. Francis Catholic Church for allowing "pro-abortion" Congressman Chet Edwards and Democratic Senate candidate Rick Noriega to be guest speakers at their parish festivals.

Estrada called those who made such invitations "ignorant of the Catholic Church's teaching about the sanctity of human life."

The purpose here is not to debate that matter, or the issue of politicians speaking at church functions, but simply to wonder about the phrase "pro-abortion."

John McCain used it to describe Barack Obama in the presidential debates.

The apparent premise: One is pro-abortion if one doesn't want to ban abortion. But McCain has said he'd allow it in cases of rape, incest and medical necessity. Does that make him pro-abortion?

Anti-abortion? Many on the right will claim that title with vigor. But what about people who work hard to head off unwanted pregnancies, and to educate children about making good choices about their sexuality? Are these people not anti-abortion as well?

If so, it could be said that Planned Parenthood, though it provides abortions, is vigorously anti-abortion.

Congressman Edwards has been denounced by some abortion foes for opposing bills in Congress to ban so-called partial-birth abortion. But as with the term "pro-abortion," there's a lot more to this appeal than meets the eye.

Fact: Edwards has co-authored bills to ban late-term abortions. The bills contained language to give exceptions when a woman's health is at risk. That would be in keeping with legal precedent under *Roe v. Wade*. The lack of such an exception is why courts have overturned some bans on the late-term procedure.

Polls consistently show that most Americans oppose an outright ban on abortion. Does that make them "pro-abortion"? Not at all. They seek to make abortion as rare as possible by promoting sound choices that preclude it, including family planning and adoption.

They know that a ban on abortion would put government in a position of making, or overriding, excruciating judgment calls about personal decisions.

Rape? Incest? Medical necessity? Preserving the woman's ability to conceive again?

Does it make a person "pro-abortion" to voice concerns about making government the decider on such matters?

Be careful in classifying people according to the narrowest of litmus tests.

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