



February 2, 2021

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Leader Charles Schumer  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

With the calendar turning to February, and budget and appropriations negotiations beginning, I write to express support for the key pro-life riders such as the Hyde Amendment because of what they represent and their importance in this time of deep division in our nation. Not only do these riders save lives, many like the Weldon Amendment protect the consciences of millions of Americans and maintain national unity over a sensitive issue.

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) is the ethics and public policy entity of the Southern Baptist Convention. The SBC is America's largest Protestant denomination of churches with over 46,000 congregations and 15.2 million Southern Baptists nationwide.

In the years following the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the Hyde Amendment was introduced to prevent taxpayer dollars from being allocated for abortion in order to protect American consciences. The amendment came in 1976 from Illinois Congressman Henry Hyde's proposal to an amendment to the Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare, Appropriation Act to block federal funding for abortions, except in the case of rape, incest, or life of the mother.

Forty-eight years later, the matters necessitating the Hyde Amendment are still with us. Those of us who object to the practice do so because of our deeply held religious and moral beliefs about the sanctity of every human life. We are all made in the image of God endowed with immeasurable worth from conception until natural death. And we strongly object to tax dollars being used for what we believe to be a great moral wrong.

Before the Hyde Amendment was introduced, approximately 300,000 abortions a year were performed using federal Medicaid dollars. It is estimated that the Hyde Amendment has saved over two million lives since it was enacted.

These reasons are of deep significance to me, as a pro-life American, but the Hyde Amendment also represents our ability as a nation of disparate views to support the fundamental principle of pluralism.

Since 1976, the Hyde Amendment has been passed by every Congress. Its success across the generations is not due to a shared belief about abortion but precisely because those Representatives and Senators believed the disagreement deserved respect. According to a recent Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll, 58% of Americans oppose taxpayer funding for abortion domestically. In addition, since Medicaid is funded both by federal and state dollars, states can decide to use their own funding to cover abortions. Currently, 17 states have decided to use state funding to provide abortions for Medicaid recipients.

The Hyde Amendment is just one of many pro-life riders that deserve to be included in all appropriations bills. To name several of many such riders, I strongly urge Congress to protect the Weldon (discrimination protections for those with objections to abortion), Dornan (Hyde protections in the District of Columbia), Helms (protection against funds being used for abortion in international aid), Siljander (protection against funds being used to lobby for abortion internationally), and Kamp-Kasten (protection against funds to organizations that support coercive abortion or sterilization) Amendments. It is crucial that these and all pro-life riders continue to be included in appropriations legislation during the 117th Congress.

The ERLC urges Congress to defend these protections against federal funds being used for abortion and to ensure that pro-life spending riders are approved in all spending legislation passed in the 117th Congress. These amendments save lives and protect American consciences. Protecting them would be an act of courageous leadership that recognizes our great democratic republic experiment is strongest when we respect one another in the midst of our disagreements. Such an act of across-the-aisle courage is desperately needed.

I look forward to working with you on these and other important issues.

Respectfully,



Russell Moore  
President  
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission