



DC OFFICE ON WOMEN'S POLICY

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The Office on Women's Policy works to facilitate an ongoing dialogue between community stakeholders and the Executive Office of the Mayor that leads to social and political reforms, constructive programs and services and an exchange of information that empowers women and girls throughout the District of Columbia to reach



House Fails to Pass Bill Attacking Rights of District Women

Discriminatory bill would single out District women in ban of post 20 week abortions

House bill H.R. 3803, the "District of Columbia Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act" recently failed to earn the support needed to pass through the US House of Representatives.

Sponsored by Rep. Trent Franks (R-AZ), the bill sought to ban abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy (the point at which proponents claim a fetus begins to feel pain), with no consideration for a women's health or her situation, even in cases of rape, incest or fetal anomaly.

Although proposed as national legislation, the bill would apply to only one jurisdiction in the nation: the District of Columbia – the sole jurisdiction without voting representation in Congress.



Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) was denied the right to testify on the bill before it was marked-up and approved at the Committee level, and then sent to the House floor for a vote.

The bill was brought to the floor on July 31, 2012 under suspension of the rules, which limits debate to only 20 minutes per side and bars amendments.

The bill earned only 220 of the 250 votes needed to pass through the House.

Congresswoman Norton praised her fellow democrats for voting down the bill in defense of the reproductive rights of District women, and the right to self-determination for all District residents.

"Seldom does the District win a vote on the floor of the House this big. Republicans failed to achieve the two-thirds majority necessary on a bill that would have denied District of Columbia residents of their constitutional rights for the first time in American history," said Congresswoman Norton. *"During floor debate, Ranking Member John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) asked Rep. Trent Franks (R-AZ), the sponsor of the bill, why his bill was not introduced as a national bill... Franks never answered. Women understood the answer, however. The D.C. label fooled no one. And, in the end, I am grateful that an overwhelming majority of Democrats stuck with the District and refused to cross over to be a party to this abuse of congressional power."*

Mayor Vincent C. Gray issued a statement that the bill *"represents not only a gross violation of District women's right to autonomy over their own bodies, but also a gross violation of our entire city's autonomy over our own affairs."*

A companion bill has been introduced in the Senate (S. 2103) and proposed as an amendment to a larger, unrelated bill, but appears unlikely to gain significant traction.