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PRO-LIFE LAW IMPLEMENTED TODAY; COURT RULING HAS LIMITED EFFECT

AUSTIN--Texas' Catholic Bishops applauded today's implementation of one of the nation's strongest pro-life laws for protecting the unborn and ensuring the health of Texas women, despite a last-minute U.S. District Court ruling that affected only a portion of the law.

U.S. District Court Judge Lee Yeakel ruled that a provision, which required abortionists to have admitting privileges within 30 miles of their facilities, fell short of constitutional standards. The state of Texas immediately filed an appeal of the decision.

Today's law was a product of a special session of the 83rd Texas Legislature. It prohibits late-term abortions after five months of pregnancy, and also works to improve the health and safety of Texas women by requiring abortion facilities to meet the standards of ambulatory surgical centers. While the Texas Catholic Conference opposes abortion, it equally values protecting and preserving the health of women, whose lives and dignity are just as precious as those destroyed by the act of abortion. Short of closing these abortion facilities, abortionists must meet the most rigorous, mandatory standards of medical inspections and regulation.

U.S. District Court Judge Lee Yeakel's last minute ruling also modified part of the law that required doctors to adhere to FDA protocols for administering the RU-486 abortifacient drug. Judge Yeakel ruled that drug-induced abortions using a non-FDA protocol could be performed within a 13-day window should there be a risk to the health and safety of the mother at the end of the first two months of pregnancy. Given that the RU-486 drug is used early in pregnancy, it is very unlikely that following the FDA protocol would present a risk to the health and safety of the mother. Thus, his ruling keeps in place provisions that require a physician to be present to administer the drugs in the vast majority of cases.

The Bishops remind Texans that today marks an important day in Texas history as it becomes illegal to take the life of innocent unborn child at 5 month's gestation. They look forward to the 5th circuit overturning Judge Yeakel's ruling and to the full implementation of the ambulatory surgical center requirements, which are effective in Sept 2014. While we will continue to work and pray to end abortion in our time, this day is a sign of progress toward that goal.

The Texas Catholic Conference is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas and is the official public policy voice of the Bishops of Texas. For more information on the Texas Catholic Conference, visit www.TXCatholic.org.

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