



Senator Feinstein to President: Don't Divide Nation
Over a Woman's Right to Choose
April 1, 2004

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged the President not to use this afternoon's signing of the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" as an opportunity to further divide the nation over the issue of a woman's right to choose.

Last Thursday, the Senate approved the legislation by a vote of 61 to 38 after narrowly defeating an amendment by Senator Feinstein that would have enacted the same tough penalties for attacks against pregnant women without creating a definition of life in federal law that could be used to chip away at a woman's constitutional right to choose.

The text of Senator Feinstein's letter follows:

"Today you will sign into law the Unborn Victims of Crime Act. As you know, this bill was the subject of vigorous debate on the floor of the United States Senate. That debate centered around whether this law, which is designed to close a loophole in the Federal criminal law, could have the effect of undermining the settled law as expressed in the Supreme Court case of Roe v. Wade.

During this debate that both proponents of the law made clear that it was not the intent of Congress to affect the ongoing national debate on abortion. Some supporters of the law have framed it differently, saying the law is designed to call into question well established case law. But on the floor of the Senate the law's authors rejected this notion. Senator Mike DeWine, the lead sponsor for this law, stated it clearly: 'This bill in front of us has nothing to do with abortion. It has absolutely nothing to do with abortion. We have explicitly exempted abortion in this bill.'

I believe this is a critical point of legislative history, and it is important to assure Americans that this law is a much-needed criminal justice provision, and not a potentially divisive statement on the abortion issue.

I hope you will make this key point clear in your signing statement today. It is important that all Americans understand what this law is about, and what it is not about.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request."

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