

Abortion resolution approved

WASHINGTON (AP) — A narrow majority of the Senate voiced support Thursday for the 1973 Supreme Court decision to legalize abortion. The vote was non-binding, but supporters said it would be used in the 2000 elections against senators who voted the other way.

"It is now clear what the true agenda of the anti-choice members ... really is," Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, said, minutes after an attempt to kill his non-binding resolution failed, 51-48.

"They want to criminalize choice." Harkin said the resolution, an amendment to another bill, would be a key weapon during next year's campaigns, when a third of the Senate will be up for reelection.

But the sponsor of the main bill up for debate, which would ban certain late-term abortions, said Democrats were just trying to "change the subject" from the specific type of procedure targeted by his bill.

"This is not about abortion, this is about where we draw the line between who's protected and who's not," said the sponsor, Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa.

Forty-five of the Senate's 54 Republicans voted to kill Harkin's non-binding amendment, which reads: "It is the sense of the Congress that Roe v. Wade was an appropriate decision and secures an important constitutional right and such a decision should not be overturned."

They were joined by two

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BARBARA BOXER
Senator, D-Calif.

Democrats, Sens. John Breaux of Louisiana and Harry Reid of Nevada. Sen. Bob Smith of New Hampshire, an independent, also voted against the resolution. And Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who was campaigning for president in New Hampshire Thursday, did not vote.

Eight Republicans joined 43 Democrats in support of the resolution. The Republicans are Sens. John Chaffee of Rhode Island, Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado, Susan Collins of Maine, James Jeffords of Vermont, Olympia Snowe of Maine, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, Ted Stevens of Alaska and John Warner of Virginia.

The Senate then voted to formally pass Harkin's amendment, with one less vote against it. Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., was absent.

The votes on the amendment were the latest development in the Senate's debate over a bill that would ban some late-term abortions, the third time in

four years the issue has come before Congress. It is headed for the same outcome: a presidential veto.

Opponents Thursday condemned the main legislation as unconstitutional and designed to boost GOP election prospects next year at the expense of pregnant women whose lives and health are in danger.

"This is the third time the president will veto this bill," Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., said Wednesday. "Why go through this if not for politics?"

The White House issued a statement Wednesday saying the bill "contains the same serious flaws" as the bills Clinton vetoed in 1996 and 1997 and the president will veto this one as well.

Santorum said unborn children deserved another attack on a medical practice that brutalizes "the most vulnerable members of our society."

"This is about infanticide," Santorum said from the Senate floor. "This is a baby who is all but born and then killed."

Rockets hit, kill 118 in Chechnya's capital

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — Pieces of rockets slammed into a crowded open air market and other parts of Grozny, including a maternity hospital, on Thursday, killing at least 118 people and injuring up to 400, a Chechen official said.

Chechen officials said the rockets were fired by Russian forces moving in on the capital.

The Russian Defense Ministry in Moscow denied responsibility.

Bodies, severed body parts and pools of blood were scattered throughout the market after six rockets exploded in the stalls, which were crowded with shoppers during the early evening attack.

At least four other rockets slammed into other parts of the city, Magomed Magomadov, a senior government official, said.

He said 118 people were killed, and between 300 people and 400 people were injured. Many of the injured were in critical condition.

Russian forces moved in to Chechnya in late September to impose a security zone around the breakaway republic and wipe out Islamic militants. Russian forces were devastated by street fighting with guerrillas in the capital during the 1994-96 war, which left

Chechnya with de facto independence.

Russian troops closed in on the Chechen capital, with advance tanks and armored personnel carriers reportedly less than eight miles outside Grozny. Chechen officials said some Russian soldiers had been spotted even closer.

Russia sent troops back into Chechnya at the end of September, following weeks of airstrikes to eliminate Islamic militants who invaded neighboring Dagestan.

The militants have also been blamed for a series of September apartment explosions in Russia that killed some 300 people, although Chechen warlords have denied responsibility for the blasts.

Witnesses told The Associated Press that they saw Russian warplanes drop bombs that exploded around the city's clothing market.

But the Interfax news agency quoted Chechen armed forces operations chief Mumadi Saidayev as saying that five Russian surface-to-surface missiles hit the market area.

Saidayev claimed missiles also hit other parts of the city, with some falling near the residence of Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, according to Interfax.



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