

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2002

The Honorable Colin L. Powell
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20520-0001

Dear Secretary Powell,

We write to commend you for the work U.S. delegations have done in negotiating international documents, including at the recent preparatory meeting for the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok, Thailand. It is critical that the United States remains engaged in efforts to promote education, health care, the elimination of poverty, and human rights, particularly for women and girls, while at the same time strongly resisting attempts to promote abortion as an international right.

We were surprised to learn that Members of the U.S. House of Representatives wrote a letter to you specifically criticizing the presence of a U.S. advisor at the Bangkok meeting, John M. Klink. Their personal attack on Mr. Klink would appear to be based solely on positions purportedly attributed to him during the Cairo Population Conference when Mr. Klink was a fully accredited member of the delegation of the Holy See and thus responsible for officially representing the Catholic Church's teachings at that forum. To single him out in this manner, particularly attributing any remarks Mr. Klink might have made as being personal, rather than acknowledging their having been made in his official capacity, is disingenuous and smacks of anti-Catholicism. We believe this type of religious discrimination has no place in government practices and should be repudiated at every opportunity. Their criticism is in any case completely unfounded given that the actions taken by the U.S. delegation, of which Mr. Klink was a member, were completely consistent with positions taken by this Administration during negotiations for the Child Summit, the World Health Assembly and the World Summit for Sustainable Development.

We are grateful that the Bush Administration has steadfastly refused to accept or reaffirm language in these documents that could be construed to include or promote abortion. You have been successful in modifying or clarifying offensive language related to abortion while continuing to promote women's human rights, education and health care. As you know, there is a concerted effort by some governments and nongovernmental organizations to push the United States to unequivocally approve documents that contain language that could be used as a basis for recognizing abortion as a human right. According to their own documents, they see this as a way to overturn some of the President's policies with which they disagree.

For example, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy (CRLP) articulated their goals in a Complaint and a Declaration filed against you and President Bush. In *CRLP v. Bush* the CRLP sought to overturn the President's Mexico City Policy through the courts. Their complaint spells out in detail the CRLP's strategy for using repetition of language in all UN conferences to

help establish “a right to abortion in the United States and every other country on earth.”

Point 76 of their complaint says: “... the CRLP has worked and will continue to work to guarantee that the right to abortion be protected as an internationally recognized human right by treaties ratified by the United States, international conference documents endorsed by the United States, and customary international law”,

Point 86 says: “By working to ensure that documents produced by the United Nations international conferences support rather than oppose abortion as an internationally recognized human right, CRLP furthers its goal of establishing that customary international law protects women's right to abortion . . .,” and

Point 88 says: “One mechanism for securing United States Senate ratification of treaties protective of abortion as a human right is to obtain ratification of such treaties by as many other nations as possible. When a critical mass of nations ratify a treaty, the United States becomes increasingly isolated in the international community and among its geopolitical allies. Moreover, generally recognized international legal norms may, if endorsed and accepted by the vast majority of nations, become part of a customary international law and thus binding on the United States even if it does not ratify or endorse those norms. Thus, it is essential to CRLP's goal of protecting abortion rights in the United States by international law that it be able to engage in unfettered political speech and advocacy to obtain ratification by foreign governments of treaties that protect abortion rights, and endorsement by foreign governments of international human rights norms that protect abortion rights.”

The CRLP, and individuals and organizations sympathetic to their goal to promote abortion internationally, will continue to be critical of the Bush Administration's policies.

We thank you for sending delegations to UN meetings and conferences that promote Bush Administration policies of care for promoting women's human rights and sustainable development while consistently rejecting hostile efforts to pressure the United States to sign documents that promote abortion. This balance is critical as the United States continues to lead with compassion in the international community.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER SMITH

Member of Congress



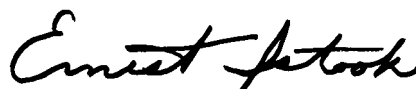
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