



# Media Reality ✓ Check

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MRC Study: Big Three Networks, News Magazines Ignored Popular Pro-Life Initiatives in 2002

## Out of Touch, Out of Time for Pro-Lifers

The national media highlight large Washington rallies when the cause is the impending death of Iraqis. But when thousands of people march against the impending death of unborn babies, that's another story. If the media once again hew to their largely pro-abortion political beliefs, Wednesday's March for Life will be quickly passed over as a publicity stunt. Because in 2002, the networks routinely remained out of touch with news developments that pleased pro-life activists.

■ **January 31:** HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson announced a rule to allow states to cover eligible unborn children under the State Children's Insurance Health

Program. **2002 coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC? Zero** on NBC. On *World News Tonight*, ABC's Peter Jennings passed over it quickly that night: "abortion rights" supporters "don't want the Bush administration to classify fetuses as human beings." In a full story on *CBS Evening News*, John Roberts noted it would "play well with conservatives," but that "abortion rights advocates see it in sharply different terms, what they call an assault on women's rights under the guise of compassion."

■ **April 17:** The House of Representatives passed the Child Custody Protection Act. It would outlaw the transportation of underage girls out of states that require parental notification or consent for an abortion so they can have an abortion without their parents' knowledge. **2002 coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC? Zero.**

■ **July 22:** The White House announced that the United States will withhold its allocation of \$34 million to the United Nations Population Fund, arguing that the U.N. agency has supported forced abortions and the punitive one-child policy of communist China. **2002 coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC? Zero.**

■ **July 26:** The House passed a new bill banning partial-birth abortion authored by Rep. Steve Chabot of Ohio. Chabot introduced the bill on June 19 and held hearings on

July 9. **2002 coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC? Zero.**

■ **August 5:** President Bush signed the Born Alive Infants Protection Act, which simply stated that any baby mistakenly born during an abortion has all the rights of any other living human being. The bill was inspired by stories that hospitals like Christ Hospital of Oak Lawn, Illinois performed "live birth abortions," setting babies aside to die. **2002 coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC? Zero.**

■ **September 25:** The House of Representatives passes the Abortion Non-Discrimination Act, which would prevent the denial of federal funds to hospitals which choose not to perform abortions. A House Energy and Commerce health subcommittee held hearings on July 11. **2002 coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC? Zero.**

■ **December 4:** The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the appeal of a 1998 case, *NOW v. Scheidler*. The National Organization for Women asked that the RICO [Racketeers Influenced and Corruption Organizations Act] statute be applied to actions by pro-life demonstrators, including Chicago activist Joe Scheidler, for conspiracy and extortion to stop abortion clinic business. The court agreed to hear the case on April 22. **2002 coverage on ABC, CBS, NBC? Zero.**

National news magazines didn't do any better. The HHS unborn-child declaration drew a brief paragraph in *U.S. News & World Report*, but nothing in *Time* or *Newsweek*. None of the three covered the UN funding fight in print, or *NOW v. Scheidler*. The House bills mentioned above drew nothing. Were these not news? Or were they left out because they put abortion advocates at a public-relations disadvantage? — *Tim Graham*

**The House of Representatives passed pro-life bills protecting babies mistakenly born in abortion procedures, opposing interstate travel for abortions without parental consent, stopping federal discrimination against pro-life hospitals, and banning partial-birth abortion. The networks and news magazines ignored all these votes.**

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