

Gratitude for Hyde's Commitment to the Unborn the Theme for the 13th Annual Proudly Pro-Life Awards Dinner Henry Hyde to Be Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award

BY Holly Smith

National Right to Life will celebrate the 13th annual Proudly Pro-Life Awards Dinner by honoring retiring pro-life champion Congressman Henry Hyde April 25 at the Willard Inter-Continental Hotel in Washington, D.C. Hyde (R-IL) was previously honored with a Proudly Pro-Life Award at the second annual dinner in 1995.

Honorees have provided exceptional and selfless service to the pro-life cause. Congressman Hyde has not only tried to save the most defenseless among us, but he has also succeeded on a level of which most can only dream.

His efforts, his victories, his leadership, and his friendship are deeply appreciated by the National Right to Life Committee and by pro-life citizens across this nation. Thus, the Proudly Pro-Life Awards Dinner seemed a most appropriate occasion to honor the career of a public official who has shown himself to be steadfast, determined, and proud in his efforts to protect human life.

Long considered the premier pro-life champion in the United States Congress, Henry J. Hyde began his congressional career in 1975. He has worked tirelessly to advance the rights and protect the lives of unborn children, seniors, veterans, working families, and victims of political oppression.

Raised in Chicago, Mr. Hyde graduated from Georgetown University and the Loyola University School of Law. He served in the Illinois House from 1966 to 1974, during which time he was one of that body's most outspoken and articulate debaters, rising to majority leader. He was married to Jeanne Simpson Hyde for 45 years until her death in 1992. He is the father of four, and the grandfather of four.

Shortly after becoming a congressman, Hyde drew his first line in the sand in defense of human life by arguing passionately that the United States government should not pay for abortion-on-demand. At that time, the federal government was funding approximately 300,000 abortions annually—the tax dollars of hard-working Americans were being used to pay for the deaths of defenseless children.

Just a freshman member of Congress, Hyde offered a surprise amendment to an appropriations bill which would prevent federal funding of abortion. To the shock and consternation of pro-abortion forces, Congress adopted the Hyde Amendment, virtually removing the federal government from the business of funding abortions. To this day the Hyde Amendment stands as an integral part of Hyde's legacy and protection for unborn children and pro-life taxpayers, alike.

During his stellar career, Hyde has served as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and is the current chairman of the House International Relations Committee. He is one of the most respected members of Congress. Congressional Quarterly once described him as "one of the most premier orators in the House. ... He speaks with wit, passion and deep convictions about the conservative causes he holds dear."

Under Mr. Hyde's leadership at the House International Relations Committee, Congress has rejected attempts to remove legal barriers to funding of organizations that perform or promote legalized abortion abroad—yet another example of lives saved due to his efforts.

In 1985 Mr. Hyde authored the book *For Every Idle Silence*, described by pro-life leaders as packed with insight, erudition, and encouragement. “We are going to win the struggle over values,” Congressman Hyde concludes in his book. “It is becoming culturally fashionable to protect the defenseless unborn. And rightly so.”

Among Congressman Hyde’s most remembered fights was his untiring effort to pass the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act through Congress and see it signed into law. This battle, which went on for eight long years, was eventually carried to victory when President Bush signed the bill into law in 2003.

During one memorable floor debate in 2000 congressman Hyde urged colleagues to support the bill. “This is not a debate about religious doctrine or even about public policy options,” he said. “It is a debate about our understanding of human dignity, what it means to be a member of the human family, even though tiny, powerless and unwanted.”

He went on to say, “We are knee-deep in a culture of death. ... Look, in this advanced democracy, in the year 2000, is it our crowning achievement that we have learned to treat people as things? Our moment in history is marked by a mortal conflict between a culture of life and a culture of death. God put us in the world to do noble things, to love and to cherish our fellow human beings, not to destroy them. Today we must choose sides.”

And throughout his career, Congressman Hyde has chosen the side of right, the side of truth, and the side of life. He has fought tirelessly for decades, siding with the angels to protect and preserve God’s most precious creation ... life. He is a hero to many and a champion to the voiceless in our society.

It is safe to say that because of his efforts across the board, hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved, if not more. But to pro-lifers nationwide, it is Congressman Hyde’s deep commitment to and passion for the cause of life that makes him a champion in the truest sense of the word.

Perhaps his best remembered commentary on the issue of abortion is this quote:

When the time comes as it surely will, when we face that awesome moment, the final judgment, I’ve often thought, as Fulton Sheen wrote, that it is a terrible moment of loneliness. You have no advocates, you are there alone standing before God and a terror will rip through your soul like nothing you can imagine. But I really think that those in the pro-life movement will not be alone. I think there will be a chorus of voices that have never been heard in this world but are heard beautifully and clearly in the next world and they will plead for everyone who has been in this movement. They will say to God, “Spare him because he loved us,” and God will look at you and say not, “Did you succeed?” but “Did you try?”

Congressman Hyde’s efforts have not gone unnoticed. We are grateful for his leadership and honored by his friendship. This year’s dinner will be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate and show our appreciation for the remarkable career and lifetime of achievement of a true pro-life hero.

For more information on ways you can support the Proudly Pro-Life Awards Dinner, please call (202) 378-8842.