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## Why abortion rate is up in Bush years

By GLEN HAROLD STASSEN and GARY KRANE

I, Glen, am a Christian ethicist, and trained in statistical analysis. I am consistently pro-life. My son David is one witness. For my family, "pro-life" is personal. My wife caught rubella in the eighth week of her pregnancy. We decided not to terminate, to love and raise our baby. David is legally blind and severely handicapped; he also is a blessing to us and to the world. Gary Krane is an investigative journalist.

We look at the fruits of political policies more than words. We analyzed the data on abortion during the Bush presidency. There is no single source for this information -- federal reports go only to the year 2000, and many states do not report -- but we found enough data to identify trends. Our findings are disturbing.

Abortion was decreasing. When President Bush took office, the nation's abortion rates were at a 24-year low, after a 17.4 percent decline during the 1990s. This was a steady decrease averaging 1.7 percent per year. (The data come from Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life using the Guttmacher Institute's studies.)

Enter George W. Bush in 2001. One would expect the abortion rate to continue its consistent course downward, if not plunge. Instead, the opposite happened.

We found four states that have posted three-year statistics: Kentucky's increased by 3.2 percent from 2000 to 2003. Michigan's increased by 11.3 percent from 2000 to 2003. Pennsylvania's increased by 1.9 percent from 1999 to 2002. Colorado's rates skyrocketed 111 percent. We found 12 additional states that reported statistics for 2001 and 2002. Eight states saw an increase in abortion rates (14.6 percent average increase), and four saw a decrease (4.3 percent average).

Under Bush, the decade-long trend of declining abortion rates appears to have reversed. Given the trends of the 1990s, 52,000 more abortions occurred in the United States in 2002 than would have been expected before this change of direction.

For anyone familiar with why most women have abortions, this is no surprise:

Two-thirds of women who have abortions cite "inability to afford a child" as their primary reason (Minnesota

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Citizens Concerned for Life). In the Bush presidency, unemployment rates increased half again. Not since Herbert Hoover had there been a net loss of jobs during a presidency until the current administration. Average real incomes decreased, and for seven years the minimum wage has not been raised to match inflation. With less income, many prospective mothers fear another mouth to feed.

Half of all women who abort say they do not have a reliable mate. And men who are jobless usually do not marry. In the 16 states, there were 16,392 fewer marriages than the year before, and 7,869 more abortions. As male unemployment increases, marriages fall and abortion rises.

Women worry about health care for themselves and their children. Since 5.2 million more people have no health insurance now than before this presidency -- with women of childbearing age overrepresented in those 5.2 million -- abortion increases.

My wife and I know -- as does my son David -- that doctors, nurses, hospitals, medical insurance, special schooling and parental employment are crucial for a special child. David attended the Kentucky School for the Blind, as well as schools for children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. He was mainstreamed in public schools as well. We have two other sons and five grandchildren, and we know that every mother, every father and every child needs public and family support.

What does this tell us? Economic policy and abortion are not separate issues; they form one moral imperative. Rhetoric is hollow, mere tinkling brass, without health care, insurance, jobs, child care and a living wage. Pro-life in deed, not merely in word, means we need a president who will do something about jobs, health insurance and support for mothers.

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