

Pro-life attacks on Church termed 'trash'

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Representatives of a National Pro-Life Political Action Committee in a Post-Register interview Wednesday afternoon sharply criticized U.S. Sen. Frank Church's congressional record on abortion but a Church spokesman termed their statements "more of the same trash that has characterized this campaign against Senator Church."

The representatives were the Rev. Charles Fiore, Order of Preachers, chairman, and Peter B. Gemma, Jr., executive, of the committee which is based at Falls Church, Va.

Fiore said he is a Roman Catholic priest, not a pastor, but a member of the Dominican Order. He said he has taught at St. Thomas in Rome, while Gemma said he is a former Roman Catholic.

The two said of 42 votes in the Senate relating to abortions, Church voted wrong 24 times and right 16 times.

On the other hand, they said Church's opponent, Republican Congressman Steve Symms has a perfect voting record the eight years he has served in the House.

The two admitted they are paid by the committee which is made up a board of directors of 36 members.

They described the organization as the "oldest and most successful anti-abortion political organization in the nation."

It was formed in early 1977, and it has been active in the 1978, 1979 and 1980 federal elections.

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They said they raise money through contributions but did not disclose from what sources they come.

Cleve Corlett, press secretary for Church, however, said Church has voted 99 percent of the time to cut federal funds for abortion, saying it is a matter of public record.

"This is another group of Virginians (compared with the Anybody but Church organization also based in Virginia) coming into this state. They don't care about Idaho politics. It is an integral part of the Symms campaign to discredit Frank Church without the slightest regards to the facts or the truth."

The two hotly denied they are being paid by Symms but acknowledged they did inform Symms they were coming to Idaho. They said he offered no objections but if he had they would have not come.

They said they did not endorse candidates but they left no doubt they like Symms' record and not that of Church.

"We want to set the record straight," said Gemma, "in the way he talks pro-life in Idaho and votes for abortion funding in Washington."

"Basically," said Fiore, "we

want to show he is inconsistent."

Gemma said Church had made points on state rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution to transfer abortion decisions to the states but no such an amendment exists.

On the other hand, they said, Symms is now cosponsor of the Human Rights Amendment.

Fiore said, "We have not come to Idaho to tell Idahoans how to vote."

Corlett commented from Washington "Idahoans are fed up with these kind of tactics and they are going to show their displeasure on election day when they vote for Frank Church."

Corlett pointed out Church has been voting against abortion for years and passed the first law in 1973 to limit abortions, called "The Conscience Clause." It prevents the government from forcing Catholics and LDS hospitals or other religiously affiliated hospitals and clinics from opening facilities for abortions. It protects doctors and nurses from being coerced from performing abortions against their moral convictions or religious principles.

The pro-life group held similar press interviews in Boise and Pocatello.