

June 9, 2009

I rise today in support of H. Res. 505, condemning the murder of Dr. George Tiller.

On May 31, 2009, Dr. Tiller was gunned down while handing out church flyers to the congregation of the Reformation Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas. Dr. Tiller was murdered because he had provided comprehensive legal reproductive healthcare to women and their families.

For 20 years, Dr. Tiller lived under a constant threat of violence. His clinic was bombed in 1986 and he was shot in both arms in 1993. He received constant death threats. Despite feeling the need to wear body armor and travel with a guard dog, he continued to provide reproductive services to women, often in the most difficult and heartbreaking circumstances. Dr. Tiller once said that he provided these services because "Women and families are intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and ethically competent to struggle with complex health issues--including abortion," he said, "and come to decisions that are appropriate for themselves." I could not agree more. Women must have the right to make their own reproductive choices.

Regardless of one's personal feelings about abortion, we all must stand vigilant against such abhorrent and vile acts of violence. To murder someone because of disagreement with his belief system is morally, ethically, and legally wrong. It is especially disturbing that this murder took place in a church. Assaulting, intimidating, and harassing doctors and clinic employees should not be tolerated.

Dr. Tiller's death is only one act of violence against those that perform abortion services. Pro-life extremists have engaged in more than 5,800 reported acts of violence against abortion providers since 1977, including bombings, arsons, death threats, kidnappings, and assaults, as well as more than 143,000 reported acts of disruption, including bomb threats and harassing calls. Eight abortion providers have been murdered in the United States, and another 17 have been the victims of attempted murder. It is past time that we condemn the violence and intimidation against clinics that provide legal services to women in need.

Condemning the Murder of Dr. George Tiller

Tuesday, 09 June 2009 00:00

I hope and pray that the friends and family members of Dr. Tiller find solace and comfort as we deal together with this historic and heartbreaking episode.