

FOCA dead; “access” bill lives

They’re not saying it very loudly, but supporters of the Freedom of Choice Act are privately conceding that the bill is dead for this session of Congress and perhaps mortally wounded.

Another piece of legislation, tagged the “clinic access bill,” is alive and well, however, and would make it a Federal crime to block abortion clinics or threaten or kill abortion providers. The access bill has a strong likelihood of passage and has taken on “front burner” status for the pro-choice camp.

While all segments of the pro-life movement united to kill FOCA, the movement is sharply divided on the propriety of clinic demonstrations and all but a lunatic fringe few would not condemn threats against or the killing of abortion providers.

While there have always been serious questions raised about the propriety and effectiveness of clinic demonstrations, the Catholic League has entered the legal arena on more than one occasion to defend the *free speech rights* of pro-life demonstrators.

The Hyde amendment, which has restricted federal payment for abortions since 1977, is also a likely target for challenge next year, but given its overwhelming passage this year, those who would seek to eliminate it or reduce its impact face the prospect of bloody congressional infighting.