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WASHINGTON (ABP)—A new statistical analysis by an evangelical seminary professor suggests the abortion rate has risen under abortion opponent President Bush, after falling for years under his pro-choice predecessor, Bill Clinton.

Glen Stassen, a trained statistician and ethics professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., wrote an article for the Sojourners magazine website and other media outlets detailing his research.

Stassen used statistics from Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life and the Guttmacher Institute, as well as a statistical analysis of state figures.

“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,” he wrote. “This was an average decrease of 1.7 percent per year, mostly during the latter

part of the decade.

“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.”

Although federal statistics on abortion rates only go up to the year 2000, Stassen extrapolated a national rate by analyzing 16 states that reported annual abortion figures for multiple years from 2001 to 2003. In those 16 states, there was a net gain in abortions between 2000 and 2003.

In the three states with statistics that ran through 2003—Kentucky, Michigan and Pennsylvania—all three showed an increase over the period.

Of the 13 states whose statistics ran through 2002, most showed a net increase in the abortion rate (a 14.6 percent average increase) and some showed a small decline (a 4.3 percent average decrease).

Extrapolating figures to the national level, Stassen said, “52,000 more abortions occurred in the United States in 2002 than would have been expected” had the abortion-rate decrease of the 1990s continued.

Stassen attributed much of the increase to economic hardships.

For instance, according to the Minnesota group's figures, two-thirds of women who abort say they cannot afford a child, and half of all women who choose to abort a pregnancy say they do not have a reliable mate.

Repeated calls to Bush campaign officials for comment on this story were not returned.

Stassen, noting he and his wife have a severely handicapped son whom they intentionally chose not to abort, said: “It's very clear from my own personal experience ... raising our pretty severely handicapped child, that the key in not having an abortion is the support that you can anticipate in

raising the child. And so, the key to decreasing abortions is getting support for prospective mothers and their babies—health insurance, child care, jobs, a husband to marry.”

In his column, Stassen said voters truly concerned about being “consistently pro-life” should look at more issues in the election than which politician opposes legal abortion.

“Economic policy and abortion are not separate issues; they form one moral imperative,” he wrote. “Rhetoric is hollow, mere tinkling brass, without health care, health insurance, jobs, child care and a living wage.”

In an interview, he reiterated that view, saying: “What I’m interested in is decreasing the number of abortions. I’m not interested in blame. But really, let’s not have all of these babies aborted.”

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