The Religious Right is stealthily attacking abortion rights in Congress under the cover of the proposed tax bill.

“Among the biggest wins for social conservatives is the inclusion of the words ‘unborn child’ in the legislation,” reports The New York Times. “The language is contained in an innocuous provision related to education savings vehicles — so-called 529 plans, which are state-sponsored, tax-free investment funds that allow families to put aside money for a child’s college education. The provision explicitly allows expectant parents to designate a ‘child in utero’ as a beneficiary of a 529 plan.”

On some level, the proposed proviso is meaningless, since parents already can set up such accounts for children they don’t yet have and later on transfer the funds to the child’s name. But on another, it is deeply significant. By explicitly recognizing the “unborn” in federal law, the GOP leadership is fulfilling the desire of the evangelical crowd to create a legal precedent based on the religious definition of life.

Anti-abortion forces are predictably gloating.
“It is fantastic because the unborn child is appropriately represented in the tax code,” Marjorie Dannenfelser, the president of the fervently anti-choice Susan B. Anthony List, crowed to the Times. “All of these things represent a serious commitment to treating the unborn child, as she or he should be, equal and protected in the eyes of the law.”

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is alarmed at this underhanded tactic.

The primary organized opposition to reproductive rights in this country always has been religion, as FFRF co-founder Annie Laurie Gaylor has repeatedly emphasized. Virtually every vocal opponent of contraception and abortion argues against these rights on the basis of God and the bible. In fact, the Freedom From Religion Foundation came into existence in good part because of the organized religious opposition to abortion rights. It is what opened the eyes of FFRF principal founder Anne Nicol Gaylor to the dangers of dogma being enshrined in our laws.

Ever since Inauguration Day, President Trump has promised the world to the Religious Right in response to its steadfast support for his presidential campaign. And he has kept that promise multiple times — from his stringent “global gag rule” to the proposed repeal on church electioneering (the Johnson Amendment) in the same tax bill. (Read more about that threat.) The “unborn” language is yet another sop that the Republican Party is throwing to its base.

“This new move may seem innocuous, but it’s actually quite pernicious,” says Gaylor. “All secular forces will be battling this sneaky attempt to undermine Roe v. Wade.”

The Trump administration invites constant vigilance on the part of freethinkers — and the freethought movement willingly accepts the invitation.