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Oklahomans For Life - LEGISLATIVE ALERT

October 23rd, 2009

National Right to Life warns U.S. House not to set up federal abortion-funding program in Health-Care bill

WASHINGTON (October 23, 2009) -- The nation's largest pro-life organization has put members of the U.S. House of Representatives on notice that it regards an upcoming procedural vote on the health care legislation as a vote on whether to establish a new federal government program that would directly pay for elective abortions with federal funds.



In [a "scorecard advisory" letter](#) sent this week to U.S. House members, the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), the federation of right-to-life organizations in all 50 states, focused on a key procedural resolution (called "the rule") that the House must approve before it can take up the massive health care bill (H.R. 3200). The "rule" will specify what amendments to the bill, if any, may be considered on the House floor.

In [a story transmitted today](#) (October 23), the Associated Press accurately reported that the House Democratic leadership currently does not intend to allow the House to vote on an amendment sponsored by Congressmen Bart Stupak (D-Mi.) and Joseph Pitts (R-Pa.), and supported by NRLC, which would, as the AP reported, "include the Hyde amendment restrictions in the health overhaul bill."

The AP reported: "Such an amendment would be almost certain to prevail . . . So Democratic leaders won't let Stupak offer it. Instead, it appears they may have to take the risk of letting Stupak try to block action on the underlying bill, which he intends to do by assembling 'no' votes on a procedural measure [the "rule"] that needs to pass before debate can begin."

As approved by Democratic-controlled House committees, H.R. 3200 contains at least two major components that implicate abortion policy. It creates a new program of premium subsidies for health insurance. The AP story discusses pro-life objections to allowing those subsidies to go to private plans that cover elective abortions. Oddly, however, the AP story does not mention the other major abortion-related controversy generated by the bill, which centers on the proposed "public plan."

NRLC Legislative Director Douglas Johnson commented: **"The bill explicitly authorizes the public plan, a federal agency program, to pay for elective abortions. Democratic leaders, including President Obama, have claimed that no federal funds would be used to pay for abortions, but this is a deception, because the public plan will be a federal agency program that can spend only federal funds. The federal government would pay abortion providers for performing elective abortions -- a sharp break from decades of federal policy."**

"The public plan problem and the premium-subsidy problem are really separate and distinct -- the bill would need to be amended to get

abortion out of the federal government plan, even if the premium subsidy program did not exist," Johnson said. "**Recent polls show strong public opposition to government funding of abortion and abortion coverage."**

NRLC has obtained and today makes publicly available [a memorandum](#) prepared for a Member of Congress by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS), which confirms all of the monies spent by the public plan would be federal funds (just as [NRLC has previously documented](#)) -- implicitly refuting the claim by Democratic leaders and President Obama that no "federal funds" would be used to pay for abortions.

"The claim by Congressional Democratic leaders that the public plan, a federal agency program, could pay for abortions with 'private' funds, is a brazen deception -- a political hoax," Johnson said. **"The claim is implausible on its face, and it collapses if subjected to anything more than the most superficial scrutiny. But for months, unfortunately, many journalists have allowed the Democratic leadership, Obama Administration officials, and President Obama himself, to get away with many demonstrably false statements regarding the abortion-related components of the pending bills."**

For example, in recent weeks White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs has said several times that existing law (the Hyde Amendment) would prevent the programs created by the health bills from funding abortions. Although this claim, too, is [demonstrably false](#), no mainstream news operation or fact-checking operation has rebuked the White House for these deceptive statements. Today's AP story does, however, correctly observe that "the Democrats' health overhaul bill would create a new stream of federal funding not covered by the [current abortion] restrictions."

While campaigning for the presidency, [Barack Obama committed to Planned Parenthood](#) that he would cover abortion in his health care reform legislation and in its public plan. "The pending legislation would establish a federal government program that would directly fund elective abortions, just as Obama promised Planned Parenthood," Johnson said. "President Obama is trying to smuggle into law a federal abortion-funding program behind smokescreens of [misleading rhetoric and calculated efforts at misdirection](#)."

NRLC has made available detailed documentation on the abortion-related components of the pending health-care bills, including bills approved by two U.S. Senate committees, on its website at <http://www.nrlc.org/ahc>.

email: info@okforlife.org
phone: 918-749-5022
web: <http://www.OkForLife.org>

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