



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on August 5, 2009

## Abortion and Public Health Insurance

Associated Press reported on August 5 that “health care legislation before Congress would allow a new government-sponsored insurance plan to cover abortions, a decision that would affect millions of women and recast federal policy on the divisive issue.” Forces on both sides of the debate are gearing up for a renewed battle once Congress returns from its recess.



Currently, federal funds can only be used in the case of rape, incest, or if the mother’s life is in danger. Pro-life supporters want the same restrictions to apply to insurance sold through the proposed health insurance exchange. Abortion advocates say this would deny abortion coverage to women who already have such coverage through private plans. If the private insurance carrier chose to participate in the exchange, women could lose their coverage.

AP said a House committee has approved a compromise that “would allow the public plan to cover abortion but without using federal funds, only dollars from beneficiary premiums. Likewise, private plans in the new insurance exchange could opt to cover abortion, but no federal subsidies would be used to pay for the procedure.”

“It’s a sham,” said Douglas Johnson, legislative director for National Right to Life. “It’s a bookkeeping scheme. The plan pays for abortion, and the government subsidizes the plan.” Representative Lois Capps (D-Calif.), the author of the compromise, said she was trying to accommodate both sides. Her amendment also would allow plans to be offered through the exchange that don’t cover abortion, not even in cases of rape, incest, or to preserve the life of the mother.

Capps, an abortion proponent, declared that “not everyone adheres to what the Catholic bishops believe. Our country allows for both sides, and our health plan should reflect that as well.” Richard Doerflinger, associate director of pro-life activities for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said: “We want to see people who have no health insurance get it, but this is a sticking point. We don’t want health care reform to be the vehicle for mandating abortion.”

Reform proposals could end up using taxpayer money for abortion because, as AP describes it, “federal funds would take the form of subsidies for low- and middle-income people buying coverage through the health insurance exchange. Subsidies would be available for people to buy the public plan or private coverage. Making things more complicated, the federal subsidies would be mixed in with contributions from individuals and employers. Eventually, most Americans could end up getting their coverage through the exchange.”



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Both the House and Senate proposals would give the health and human services secretary the power to decide whether or not abortion would be covered in the public insurance plan. Here we have a clear example of President Obama's healthcare reform proposals serving to take power away from the people and giving it to government. If Americans don't want government to have this kind of control over the nation's healthcare system, then they should contact their representative and senators before the recess is over.

*Photo: Representative Lois Capps (D-Calif.)*



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