



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 24, 2010

## Taxpayer-funded Abortions for Military Personnel?

Unbeknownst to most Americans, an amendment to the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act passed the United States Senate that would allow abortion procedures in military clinics and hospitals worldwide. Sponsored by Democratic Senator Roland Burris and passed by the Senate Armed Services Committee by a vote of 15-12, the amendment was passed by a partisan vote, with only one exception: Nebraska's Democratic Senator Ben Nelson.



According to [Gop.gov](#), the 2011 National Defense Authorization Act:

Authorizes \$567 billion in budget authority for the Department of Defense (DoD) and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DoE). The bill also authorizes \$159 billion to support overseas contingency operations during Fiscal Year 2011 and authorizes \$34 billion for Fiscal Year 2010 supplemental appropriations for overseas contingency operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and to provide humanitarian and disaster assistance to assist victims following the earthquake in Haiti. The underlying bill does not address the DoD's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy regarding homosexuals in the military.

The Act passed the House of Representatives in May by a comfortable margin, but according to the Rare Metal Blog, "The next step will be for the Senate to work on its own version of the NDAA, for the two items to then be amalgamated in conference, before being signed into law later this year."

Called the Burris amendment, the amendment to the Act was approved by the Senate Armed Services Committee in order to undo restrictions on elective military abortions, though current law does allow for abortions to be performed if the life of the mother is in danger, or in the case of rape or incest, with the resources provided by the Department of Defense. However, current law does allow for women in the military to leave the base and seek an abortion.

The *Washington Times* explains, "The military ban has a long history. It was first imposed in spending bills in the late 1970s and was codified in defense policy in 1985. President Clinton issued an executive order in 1993 allowing women to obtain privately funded abortions at overseas military hospitals, but pro-life groups said that military doctors refused to perform the procedures and civilian doctors had to be brought in."

In 1995, Republicans undid the damage of the Clinton administration by reinforcing the ban on elective abortions.

Until the passage of the Burris amendment.

Ironically, debate over the amendment erupted shortly after the fight over taxpayer-funded abortions nearly halted the passage of the healthcare bill in its tracks. Concerns articulated by pro-life politicians prompted President Obama to sign an executive order assuring that the healthcare bill would not fund abortions.



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The *Washington Times* reports that the efforts made by the Burris Amendment are meant to “accomplish radical social change-to mainstream abortion, to press the government into providing it on a widespread scale so that it becomes respectable and ordinary.”

Burris defended his amendment by asserting that military personnel deserved “the highest quality care”, which he contends “includes allowing women and their families the right to choose at facilities operated under the Department of Defense.”

Supporters of the Burris amendment include NARAL Pro-Choice America. Spokeswoman for the organization Nancy Keenan applauded the amendment, declaring that joining the military “shouldn’t cause women to lose health care options if they’re stationed overseas.”

Critics, on the other hand, assert that the amendment is a misuse of taxpayer dollars.

Texas Republican and House Armed Services Committee member William M. Thornberry remarked, “This administration and its allies seem determined to upend widely accepted compromises reached on a variety of issues.” He added, “Most Americans would find it deeply offensive to have their taxpayer dollars go to pay for abortions in the military.”

Similarly, pro-life Republican Representative Christopher Smith asserts that he will continue to work to maintain the ban on military abortions. Smith claims, “We’ve had to fight this fight before. Military hospitals should not be turned into abortion mills.”

Referring to Obama’s executive order, which allegedly guaranteed that federal funds would not fund abortions, Smith states, “This will now be a test to see if Obama sticks to his word.”

The Military Culture Coalition (MCC) commissioned an August survey that indicates American voters oppose allowing abortion on military bases. The same survey showed that Americans were opposed to repealing the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military policy.

However, Life Site News specifies that of the two issues, those surveyed were more concerned by the military abortions than openly gay service members in the military.

“According to the MCC poll, voters were more decidedly opposed to allowing abortion in U.S. military medical facilities, by a margin of 49 percent to 41 percent. Also the political ramifications were greater, as 43 percent of voters said they would be less likely to vote for lawmakers who approve tax-funded abortions at military bases, while just 21 percent said they would be more likely.”

Regardless of the results of the poll, Senator Burris has made it a point to assert his own agenda, which includes maintaining elective military abortions as well as repealing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” through a bill he co-sponsored in March.



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