



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 20, 2010

Military Defense Policy Bill Loaded With Controversy

Last week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was criticized for adding controversy to what should have been an uncontested military defense policy bill by including an amendment that would provide amnesty to illegal aliens, and a provision that suspends “Don’t ask, Don’t tell.” Democratic Senator Roland Burris further complicated the passage of the bill with the inclusion of an amendment that would end a longstanding ban on military abortion at overseas hospitals.



The same social conservatives opposed to the DREAM Act — Reid’s amendment that would provide amnesty to any young person who attends college or enlists in the military — and against the provision that would end the military policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” instituted by former Democratic President Bill Clinton in the 1990s, are opposed to Burris’ amendment.

Burris’ proposal targets restrictions placed on abortions performed at military hospitals. As it stands now, military abortions are prohibited except in the cases of rape, incest, or if the life of the mother is threatened. However, current policy entitles female military personnel to leave the military base to seek an abortion.

According to the *Washington Times*, “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, however, Republicans in Congress reinstated the military ban on elective abortions.

Burris’ amendment passed the Senate Armed Services Committee by a partisan vote of 15-12, with the exception of Democratic Senator Ben Nelson. Nelson maintains that he opposes “elective abortions on publicly funded facilities.”

Burris has defended his amendment by arguing that military personnel are entitled to “the highest quality care,” which, to the chagrin of social conservatives, “includes allowing women and their families the right to choose at facilities operated under the Department of Defense.”

Democratic supporters of the amendment claim that the military women seeking the abortions will pay for the procedure with their own money. However, Republicans contend that the amendment is a misuse of taxpayer dollars, because the doctors who will be performing the abortions and the facilities



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where the procedures will take place are federally funded.

Speaking at the Values Voter Summit this past weekend, Oklahoma's Republican Senator James Inhofe remarked that the amendment would "turn our military hospitals into abortion clinics."

Fox News reports, "The Senate will meet Monday to resume consideration of the defense bill, with a vote to start formal debate set for the following day. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has indicated that even if the Senate clears that hurdle, which requires 60 votes, the defense bill likely will not come up for a final vote until after the November election." If the outcome of the November elections results in Republican congressional control as predicted, the defense bill will be sure to face heavy opposition as long as it includes the controversial provisions.

According to a poll released by The Polling Company for the Center for Military Readiness and the Military Culture Coalition, Americans are largely opposed to taxpayer-funded abortions on United States military bases, 49 to 41 percent. Likewise, the poll shows that lawmakers who vote in favor of such abortions are risking their careers, as 43 percent of Americans reported that they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who has supported military abortions, with just 21 percent reporting that they would be more likely to vote for the same candidate (however, that is why the vote will likely take place after the November elections).

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