

DECEPTION AND BIGOTRY MARK HEALTH BILL

Just as we were ready to go to print, the House passed the health care bill. What follows are key events leading up to the vote.

Every time spokesmen for the president were asked about the Senate health care bill that authorizes federal funds for abortion, they replied that none of the bills put forth are the president's own. Moreover, the president has said on numerous occasions that he would never sign a health care bill that funds abortion.

The issue was settled once and for all when President Obama's own proposal was released. The president's bill, which modified some of the aspects of the Senate bill, made "no changes to the controversial abortion language included in the Senate bill," according to *Newsweek*.

While it is true that the pro-abortion camp was unhappy with the president for not striking some restrictions it deplores, the fact remains that President Obama could have adopted the pro-life friendly language of the House bill. The fact he didn't is what matters most.

Soon after the president announced his proposal, Rep. Bart Stupak—a Michigan Democrat—and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius appeared on "Good Morning America" to discuss abortion funding in the president's health care bill. Stupak maintained that the bill provides for abortion coverage; Sebelius disputed that claim.

On December 8, 2009, CNN reported that "The Senate on Tuesday rejected an amendment to tighten restrictions on federal funding for abortion in the sweeping health care bill it is debating." It added that the amendment "mirrored language in

the House bill that prevents any health plan receiving federal subsidies from offering coverage of abortion.”

On November 5, 2009, the *New York Times* quoted Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe who wrote a memorandum analyzing the House bill. He said that the House bill, “as it currently stands, does not authorize governmental funding of abortion.”

If the Senate had rejected an amendment that “mirrored language in the House bill,” and the House bill “does not authorize governmental funding of abortion,” then it is obvious that Sebelius misled the nation. What’s worse is that she willfully did so.

Soon after his appearance on “Good Morning America,” Stupak appeared on a Michigan radio show. During the interview he drove home the fact that despite his attempts to retain the status quo and keep abortion funding from the health bill, there are elements—namely Rep. Henry Waxman—in Washington that “want to pay for abortions.”

It was bad enough that Obama, Sebelius and others were deceiving the nation, but as the vote neared a whole new dimension was added: anti-Catholicism ran rampant.

NPR ran an article on its website titled, “Powerful Catholic Quietly Shaping Abortion, Health Bill Debate.” The piece was about Richard Doerflinger, the pro-life point man for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The undue headline marred the otherwise fair piece.

NPR, however, looked innocent compared to others. Slate.com questioned, “Whither Ecumenism? Catholics Interfere with a Rival Doctrine.” *Newsweek* ran a piece entitled, “When Bishops Play Politics: A New Generation Gets Righteous.” Examiner.com used the headline “Religion Pollutes, Threatens Health Care Reform via Abortion, Catholic Bishops.” And RHRealitycheck.org posted an article beckoning readers to “take a good, hard look at just how the Bishops are cooking it up...Covering-up their

real intentions with lofty sentiments about morality and justice while they cook-away, and deal-away, behind closed doors....”

“Jews Interfere.” “When Rabbis Play Politics: A New Generation Gets Righteous.” “Religion [Judaism] Pollutes.” “Rabbis Deal-Away, Behind Closed Doors.” Such bigotry would never be published by any of the aforementioned outlets.

Inevitably, Stupak, a Catholic, became the target of much of the bigotry. Connie Saltonstall, a Michigan activist, decided that she would challenge Stupak in the Democratic primary. Citing his “personal, *religious* views,” she said it is “reprehensible” for him to “deprive his constituents of needed health care reform because of those views.” (Italics added.) Mary Pollock, the legislative vice president of the Michigan chapter of the National Organization for Women, accused Stupak of imposing his religious beliefs on the nation. “It is outrageous and un-American,” Pollock said of the pro-life congressman.

Smear words have been used against virtually every religious, racial and ethnic group in American history. Fortunately, they are rarely voiced anymore. Unfortunately, it is still fair game in many quarters to indict Roman Catholics. One of the most vile canards ever invoked against Catholics is the rap that they are “un-American.” This bigoted slur has its origins in the early part of the 19th century. It is more than disconcerting—it is disgusting—that it is still being made against Catholics in 2010. That it should come from the mouth of a radical feminist activist is not wholly surprising, but it is reprehensible nonetheless.

As the clock continued to wind down on the health care bill, anti-Catholicism raised its ugly head with great frequency. We called on men and women of goodwill and from all faith backgrounds, and on both sides of the abortion issue, to unequivocally denounce these bigoted expressions.