

# HEALTH CARE POLITICS: ABORTION ISSUE BOILS OVER

It seldom happens that one issue dominates an entire season, but this summer the debate over health care commanded everyone's attention. It wouldn't have occasioned the interest of the Catholic League had it not been for the life issues. But when abortion and conscience rights for health care workers are included in the legislation, it's enough to draw us to the table; "end-of-life" issues were originally in the Senate bill.

Two weeks into the Obama administration, a Gallup poll reported that the president received high marks from the public on most issues. The one glaring exception was abortion: only 35 percent agreed with him on allowing funding of abortions overseas. It was then revealed in another survey that a majority of Americans now consider themselves pro-life. When we went to press, the president still hadn't asked his party members in Congress to exclude abortion from the health care bills.

It is no secret that this is the most radical pro-abortion administration in American history. The number of former employees of Planned Parenthood, NARAL and Emily's List is astounding. So extreme is the president and his staff on this issue that they are apparently willing to sink health care reform before ever excluding abortion from the final bill.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, a strong advocate of universal health care, was so troubled by the prospect of a health care bill that funds abortion that it pulled its support. By doing so, it stood on principle. Justin Cardinal Rigali and Bishop William Murphy provided the leadership.

It was hard to listen to those who support the bills make the claim that abortion is nowhere mentioned in them. True but phony: it is precisely because abortion is seen as a medical procedure that it is automatically included in these health care bills, unless otherwise noted. This explains why the pro-abortion industry was delighted with them. Want further proof? Rep. Bart Stupak, Rep. Joe Pitts, Rep. Eric Cantor, Rep. Sam Johnson, Senator Mike Enzi and Senator Orrin Hatch all specifically introduced legislation that would bar abortion funding from these bills. And guess what? They all lost.

As this issue of *Catalyst* documents, the Catholic League spent a good part of the summer seeking to educate the public, especially Catholics, about the details. We pointed out, for example, that when the White House posted a "Reality Check" on these bills, and sought to debunk many of the reasons why its opponents were wrong, it never tried to convince the public that abortion wasn't included in the bills.