

OBAMA BETRAYS THE BISHOPS

Is President Obama for or against abortion coverage in the health care bill? The guessing game is over.

On September 30, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops sent a letter to the U.S. Senate saying, "So far, the health reform bills considered in committee, including the new Senate Finance Committee bill, have not met President Obama's challenge of barring use of federal dollars for abortion."

We now know that President Obama—who is lobbying to excise the abortion restrictions that the bishops wanted—has betrayed the bishops.

Here is how *New York Times* reporter Robert Pear put it on November 10: "President Obama suggested Monday that he was not comfortable with abortion restrictions inserted into the House version of major health care legislation, and he prodded Congress to revise them." Although Obama spoke out of both sides of his mouth in his ABC News interview, Pear's statement is an accurate reflection of the president's position.

The manly thing for the president to do would be to state the obvious: his love for abortion rights brooks no compromise. But he won't do so, choosing instead to play the same old shell game he's been playing all along. And he is not alone. For months, we have been told that the bill does not cover funds for abortion, yet if that were true, there would have been no need for the Stupak amendment, and no resistance to it.

This has been a great moment for the bishops, and for Catholics generally, but the fight is not over. It's important that those on both sides know exactly who the players are on each team.