

The Clinton Health Plan Covers Abortion-on-Demand

By Rep. Henry Hyde

Henry Hyde has represented the Sixth Congressional District of Illinois since 1975. He is acknowledged to be the most eloquent and effective defender of unborn children in the Congress of the United States. In 1983, the Catholic League bestowed on him its highest honor, The John Paul II Religious Freedom Award. This article first appeared in Human Events, February 18, 1994. It is reprinted here with permission.

Someone once described abortion as a man's answer to a woman's problem. It certainly has become President Clinton's answer to a great many problems. His administration is pioneering new frontiers in the extermination of the most defenseless human beings under the guise of advancing "reproductive rights."

Within recent weeks, his appointees at the Department of Health and Human Services launched a regulatory attempt to force all states to pay for abortions in cases of rape and incest, even when their laws – or their constitutions, as in Colorado and his home state of Arkansas – forbid such funding.

Meanwhile, Clintonites at the State Department have submitted to their allies in Congress legislation that would, for the first time in 20 years, permit the direct expenditure of U.S. dollars for abortions overseas, as part of our foreign aid program. This is a barbaric generosity, indeed.

This extremism should surprise no one, even though it comes from a President who, only a year ago, argued that abortion should be legal, but rare. For since then, Clinton has taken every possible step to make abortion, not only legal, but even more commonplace. He began by greasing the skids for domestic production and use of RU486, in effect launching chemical

warfare against our own population.

Interestingly, “progress” on this front has been slow because the pharmaceutical companies know what Clinton didn’t tell the American people: that RU486 is a terribly dangerous drug for a mother as well as for her unborn child, and that its use requires close medical supervision to guard against complications, including maternal death. Even the most amoral corporate CEO understands what that could mean in terms of litigation and bad publicity.

Federal Funds for Abortion Referrals

Clinton had more success with another initiative, striking down the Reagan-Bush regulations that would have cleaned up the federal family planning program, better known as Title X (of the Public Health Service Act). Thanks to the President, Title X grantees are still free to hand out birth control drugs and devices to minors without parental consent, or even notification, and they can continue to counsel and refer for abortions on the same basis.

Clinton’s drive for “safe but rare” abortions led him to restore U.S. funding for the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), which includes technical assistance for China’s forced abortion program. He also renewed funding for international organizations – principally the International Planned Parenthood Federation – that promote or provide abortions, thereby striking down a major pro-life achievement of recent years.

He had less success, however, in fostering abortion among U.S. military personnel abroad. Congress declined to repeal the Jepsen Amendment of 1984, forbidding the use of Defense Department dollars for abortions. And when the White House changed past policy and allowed the use of Department of Defense facilities for privately financed abortions, virtually no military physician, in either the European or Asian

theaters, would agree to perform them.

Of course, the most important triumph for the abortion lobby under President Clinton was the elevation of Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the Supreme Court. That nomination reflects what the administration boldly admits is a pro-abortion litmus test for judicial selection.

(Remember the accusation that Presidents Reagan and Bush had a pro-life litmus test for choosing judges? They didn't, but were criticized for it. Clinton does, admits it and is applauded by the same people who falsely accused his predecessors.)

All those moves to advance abortion were only preliminaries to the main bout, so to speak. That is the fight over the place of abortion in health care reform. Clinton has dealt with this issue the way he has handled other controversies. Begin with denials, then blur the issue with confusing details and, finally, evade the subject by attacking your accusers.

It remains to be seen how well that play-book will work on other matters, but it's a sure failure in the health care fight. At the outset, last spring and summer, administration officials made vaguely reassuring comments, even suggesting that the administration could live with the Hyde Amendment, barring the use of Medicaid dollars for elective abortions. That need not change under a national health system, we were told; and as for the general public, well, their health insurance coverage would remain the same as before with regard to abortion. If they didn't want it, they wouldn't have to have it.

As Hillary Clinton told CNN Sept. 23, 1993, "We are not increasing the availability or decreasing the availability of abortion. We are really trying to strike a balance so that we provide what is available now." But when President Clinton finally submitted legislation later in the year, the ugly

truth emerged: The Clinton health care plan would use tax dollars and compulsion to interweave abortion into the fabric of American life.

It hijacks health care reform to the cause of abortion fights, employing the full weight of law to make every American acquiesce in the notion that abortion is a positive good, a “basic benefit.”

For starters, the Clinton plan would provide tax-subsidized coverage of abortion-on-demand for the entire Medicaid population, thereby nullifying both the Hyde Amendment and the restrictions on tax-funded abortions in effect in 37 states.

But there’s more. The Clinton bill includes “family planning services and services for pregnant women” in its federally mandated “comprehensive benefits package.” After some initial mumbo-jumbo by administration spokespersons, both the President and the First Lady explicitly acknowledged that this terminology encompasses abortion upon request – an assessment shared by legal experts on both sides of the abortion issue.

Even Runs to Pay for Abortion-on-Demand

This has far-reaching ramifications. It means no health plan could be certified for sale to the public unless it covered abortion without restriction. No one – not even nuns – could obtain health insurance without paying for abortion coverage. Individual doctors or hospitals could refuse to perform abortions, but the health plan of which they are a part must enter into a contract with a local abortion provider – and must pay for all abortions.

It gets worse. No health plan could be sold if it did not provide access to abortion within the local area covered by the plan.

This means that the federal government, through its quasi-governmental Health Alliances, would mandate creation of large

numbers of new abortion mills in communities where none currently exist.

Every employer would be forced to contribute to insurance coverage for abortion-on-demand for all employees – with no exceptions. That includes religious organizations. Under the bill proposed by the President, religious opponents of abortion, like leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Roman Catholic bishops, would be compelled, by force of law, to pay premiums to cover abortion-on-demand for all their employees.

With only a few exceptions – such as undocumented aliens – every working American would have government-mandated “premiums” taken from their paychecks to pay for abortion-on-demand.

Finally – and this is truly scary – the Clinton bill sets up a National Health Board, composed of seven presidential appointees, with sweeping powers to nullify state laws or policy that even slightly limit access to abortion. I’ll cite just one example. Pro-abortion groups have become increasingly critical of the laws in effect in 46 states that allow only licensed physicians to perform abortions. The bill, however, explicitly authorizes the board to nullify state laws governing the qualifications of medical professionals.

This would certainly lead to a federal decree legalizing performance of abortions by nurse practitioners, midwives and physicians’ assistants – a point cited in favor of the bill by groups such as Planned Parenthood.

Other state laws regulating abortion, such as parental consent requirements, waiting periods and so forth, could be struck down by the National Health Board as impediments to a federally guaranteed benefit – i.e., abortion.

When all these horrors in their plan became known, the Clintons, true to form, went on the attack, charging that

their critics wanted to “take away” abortion coverage from the women of America. It was a clever ploy, but based on falsehood.

First, there is a big difference between taking something away and simply not mandating it.

Second, there is ample evidence to suggest that abortion coverage is not the current norm in health insurance. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported Sept. 24, 1993, that “Such coverage was common in health maintenance organizations but unusual in fee-for-service plans and in employers’ self-funded plans. Self-funded plans provide health coverage for 65% of American workers.” The *Omaha World-Herald*, reported Sept. 28, 1993, that Mutual of Omaha, the nation’s largest provider of individual health insurance and one of the largest group health insurance providers, generally does not cover abortions. Abortion clinic operators openly bemoan the fact that most of their insured patients do not have coverage for abortion.

Public Rejects Mandated Abortion Coverage

So the Clinton bill would not preserve the status quo in abortion coverage for most women. On the contrary, it would, for the first time, mandate coverage which most of them do not want. Consider polls conducted by the *New York Times* in March and June of 1993, asking specifically whether abortion should be included in the basic benefit package of a national health bill. American women said no, 72% in the March poll, 65% in the June poll.

The actual numbers may be even higher, as evinced by a November 1992 Wirthlin poll, which asked, “Do you favor or oppose abortion being allowed as a method of birth control?” Eighty-four percent of Americans, and 89% of American women, said they were opposed. That’s something to keep in mind when the administration tries to portray its opponents as anti-

women.

With public opinion so strongly against him on this issue, can President Clinton push an abortion mandate through Congress? I doubt it. A more likely scenario would be the removal of explicitly pro-abortion language from his bill, while leaving in place the awesome, even totalitarian, powers of the National Health Board to define mandated benefits.

That would have exactly the same results. Every problem outlined above would still apply, as indeed they would apply to certain other health care plans, popular among some members of both parties, which have thus far escaped detailed scrutiny.

That's the key element in all aspects of the health care debate: public exposure and education. Once the American people fully understand what Clinton is attempting to do under the guise of reforming health care, they will pull the plug on his misconceived plan. They will reject its government controls, rationing, taxes and, not least of all, its attempt to make abortion a way of life and a way of death for everyone.