



November 22, 2009

A New Struggle over Women's Right to Choose

The major health coverage bill passed by the House of Representatives on November 14 included an amendment by Reps. Bart Stupak (D, MI) and Joseph Pitts (R, PA) that would severely undermine coverage for abortions, rolling back present rights. At the same time, the provision threatens to derail health reform.

Rekindling Reform fully supports *Roe v. Wade* and all of the rights that that ruling ensures. We see the *Roe* decision as heralding an acknowledgement of full economic and political equality for women.

Women in the U.S. should keep the rights they currently enjoy to first and second trimester abortions. Present restrictions on federal funding for most abortions unduly impose religious beliefs onto matters of state. They should be reversed. These rights are assured in all European Union countries regardless of their religious cultures and obligations.

These rights can be real in the United States only if all third-party coverage, public and private, covers abortion and all other women's medical needs.

We support the position of leading women members of Congress: that health reform should, at a minimum, leave in force the current law affecting a woman's right to choose. This appears to be the position of the Obama administration as well.

We understand that, if the Stupak-Pitts amendment becomes the law of the land, all insurers who participate in the health insurance exchanges, be they for-profit, nonprofit or public plan option, will in effect be barred from paying for abortions.

And, if that happens, the risk is high that the insurance industry will drop abortion coverage from all health insurance policies, according to an analysis by Professor Sara Rosenbaum and colleagues at the George Washington University Department of Health Policy. Alternatively, according to the Center for Policy Analysis, women and employers will not buy coverage through the exchanges, destroying their potential to influence the health care system,

It is urgent that you contact President Obama, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand as well as Senator Reid, and let them know that you expect their full support toward guaranteeing that the health reform legislation does nothing to restrict the rights of women to abortion and other reproductive health services.