

# Obama and Democratic Leaders in Congress Hoping To Impose Sweeping Abortion Mandates In “Health Care Reform”

WASHINGTON

(Updated May 18, 2009)

Congressional Democratic leaders are currently at work crafting “health care reform” legislation that they, and President Obama, hope to ram through Congress on a fast track this summer.

Many details of the legislation have not yet been revealed. But this much is clear: President Obama, with the help of some of the most powerful Democrats in Congress, hopes to use “health care reform” as a vehicle to vastly expand access to abortion on demand.

**“The pro-abortion movement sees federal ‘health care reform’ legislation as a golden opportunity to force-feed abortion into every nook and cranny of the health-care delivery system,” explained NRLC Federal Legislative Director Douglas Johnson.**

**“Their goal, as they sometimes put it, is to ‘mainstream’ abortion. They hope to use the structure of a federal health-care law to make abortion on demand accessible in every region of every state, paid for by taxes and by government-mandated private insurance premiums.”**

This goal was underscored by Cecile Richards, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), in comments reported by National Public Radio on April 30, 2009: **“I think the big picture here is how do we make sure that all women and families, regardless of their income, can get access to the full range of health care options, and I think health care reform is going to provide a platform for doing that.”**

On March 27, 2009, John McCormack, a reporter for *The Weekly Standard*, asked Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nv.) if he could support a national health care bill that provided coverage for abortion. Reid replied, “I could.”

**Johnson warned, “If these people succeed, the result will be a very large increase in the number of abortions performed in America.”**

## President Obama’s Position

Throughout his political career as an Illinois state senator and as a U.S. senator, Barack Obama was a strong supporter



President Barack Obama



Cecile Richards, President, Planned Parenthood

***“In my mind, reproductive care is essential care, basic care, so it is at the center, the heart of the plan that I propose.”***

Barack Obama speaking to the annual conference of Planned Parenthood Action Fund, July 17, 2007.

of the entire agenda of the pro-abortion lobby. He led the opposition even to bills that won support from many other pro-abortion lawmakers, such as the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act and the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act. He consistently opposed any limitations on government funding of abortion on demand.

On July 17, 2007, during Obama’s campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, he appeared before the annual conference of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. Speaking of his plans for “health care reform,” Obama said, “in my mind, reproductive care is essential care, basic care, **so it is at the center, the heart of the plan that I propose.**” [emphasis added]

**Under his plan, Obama explained, people could choose to keep their existing private health care plans, but “insurers are going to have to abide by the same rules in terms of providing comprehensive care, including reproductive care ... that’s going to be absolutely vital.”**

Regarding Obama’s statements, the *Chicago Tribune* reported: “Asked about his proposal for expanded access to health insurance, Obama said it would cover ‘reproductive-health services.’ Contacted afterward, an Obama spokesman said that included abortions.” (“Democrats Pledge Support for Wide Access to Abortion,” by Mike Dornig, *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 2007.)

This position was later elaborated on in the written response that the Obama presidential campaign sent to a pro-abortion group, [www.rhrealitycheck.org](http://www.rhrealitycheck.org), in December 2007, which said: “Senator Obama believes that reproductive health care is basic health care. His health care plan will create a new public plan, which will provide coverage of all essential medical services. **Reproductive health care is an essential service – just like mental health care and disease management and other preventive services under his plan. And private insurers that want to participate will have to treat reproductive care in the same way.**”

NRLC’s Johnson commented, “During his campaign, Obama was very clear that he believes that abortion on

demand is a basic health service that should be part of a minimum, government-mandated package of benefits. That means, among other things, that the law would require workers and employers to pay for universal abortion coverage with their mandatory premiums, and require all taxpayers to fund abortion on demand for lower-income people.”

In addition to imposing mandates on private employers and insurers, Obama and many congressional Democratic leaders also want all Americans to have the choice of enlisting in a so-called “public plan,” which means a health plan run entirely by the government.

Obama consistently has opposed (as an Illinois state senator, U.S. senator, and presidential candidate) all limits on the funding of abortions in Medicaid and other government-run health programs.

## Democrats Map Out Stealth Strategies

The pro-abortion forces know that the pro-abortion policies they hope to impose do not have broad public support. A national Zogby poll conducted in late November of 2008 asked if “a bill that would force many employers to provide health insurance to their employees” should “require insurance plans pay for abortions when the abortions are performed as a method of birth control,” to which 71 percent said no while 20 percent said yes.

**Johnson said this public opinion is one reason why Democratic congressional leaders hope to leave as little time as possible between the time that they unveil the actual “health care reform” legislation, which is expected in June, and the time that the full House and Senate hold votes on the legislation, which is currently planned for July.**

“In 1993, the Clinton health-care scheme failed in Congress partly because people had time to study it and to react to its radical implications,” Johnson said. **“This time, the Obama Administration and congressional Democratic leaders hope to succeed with a combination of speed, deceptive terminology, expensive propaganda and attack ads by the pro-abortion groups, and sympathetic coverage by the mainstream news media, in order to ram their ‘reforms’ into law. Anyone who doesn’t like that had better start speaking up, right now.”** (See “Action Request” at the end of the article.)

## Breaking the Code

Johnson noted that a detailed analysis of the Democratic “reform” proposals must await the unveiling of the actual legislation, which is currently being written by Congressional Democratic committee chairmen in collaboration with Obama Administration officials. However, he warned, crafters of the legislation may try to camouflage the pro-abortion mandates.

One mechanism for such concealment would be to use the legislation to create a board or commission within the federal Executive Branch, on which Congress would confer future authority to declare specific “health services” to be mandated. Or, the bill could be written to confer such blank-check authority on the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Another method would be to put vague terms in the law – for example, a mandate for “reproductive health” or “pregnancy-related” services – that would later be interpreted by administrators, or judges, as covering elective abortion.

When Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on April 22, 2009, Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) asked her whether the Administration defined the terms “reproductive health” or “reproductive services” to include abortion. Clinton replied, “Reproductive health includes access to abortion, that I believe should be safe, legal, and rare.”

**“Pro-life Americans should vigorously oppose any federal ‘health care reform’ legislation that does not explicitly exclude abortion from the scope of any government-defined or government-mandated package of health care services,” Johnson explained. “A bill that delegates authority to some board to require abortion coverage is simply a covert, two-step method for imposing sweeping pro-abortion mandates on all employers and all citizens.”**

## Built-in FOCA?

The actual legislation might turn out to contain pro-abortion mandates even more sweeping than those already outlined.

The “health care reform” legislation pushed by President Clinton in 1993, which failed in Congress after being strongly opposed by NRLC and many other groups, would have required access to abortion in every region of every state (referred to by pro-life forces as the “abortion clinic mandate”). The Clinton-backed legislation would also have invalidated all state laws that interfered with access to abortion – for example, parental notification laws.

“A health care bill that mandates access to abortion, and that invalidates all state laws that impede such access, would be basically the so-called ‘Freedom of Choice Act’ under a different title,” Johnson commented.

The “Freedom of Choice Act” (FOCA) is a proposed federal law that would invalidate virtually all state and federal limits on abortion, including partial-birth abortion, and would require government funding of abortion without limitation. As a U.S. senator, Obama cosponsored the FOCA, and as a presidential contender he promised to sign it if given the opportunity.

## Republicans Respond

Republican congressional leaders have already expressed objections to some elements of the anticipated Democrat-crafted legislation, including the concept of creating a government-run insurance plan that would be open to all Americans, regardless of income level, which would compete with private insurance plans. Many observers believe that the creation of such a “public option plan” would be a stepping stone towards a complete takeover of health-care financing by the government – that is, a “single-payer” system such as that found in some European countries.

Pro-life Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), who is the ranking Republican on the Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over some aspects of health care legislation, said at a March event hosted by the Kaiser Family Foundation that the question of whether to create a government-run insurance

option is “a deal-breaker for Republicans if it’s in, and it’s a deal-breaker for Democrats if it’s not.”

But, Grassley added, “I told you that abortion is about the only issue I know of that’s not compromisable.”

On May 13, House Republican leaders sent a letter to President Obama outlining “areas for potential common ground on health care reform.” After summarizing several policy principles the leaders believe should guide reform, the leaders added, “We also believe these goals can be accomplished through health reform that maintains current law provisions regarding restrictions on federal funding of abortion services, restricts federal funds from flowing to abortion providers, and does not impose mandates either on insurance carriers or medical providers to participate in activities that violate their religious and moral beliefs.” The letter was signed by Republican Leader John Boehner (Ohio), Whip Eric Cantor (Va.), Republican Conference Chairman Mike Pence (In.), and others.

## **Abortion Mandates Top Priority for Pro-Abortion Groups**

The imposition of sweeping pro-abortion mandates as part of “health care reform” is currently the top priority of many pro-abortion organizations. These organizations are pushing for the abortion mandates both in public statements and in less visible lobbying efforts.

In a “wish list” memorandum signed by PPFA and over 60 other pro-abortion organizations and submitted to the Obama transition team in November 2008, the groups said, “It is imperative that the President put forward a health care reform plan that guarantees access to comprehensive, high-quality, affordable health care for all. . . . Comprehensive benefits must include access to the full range of reproductive health services, including contraception, maternity care, and abortion care.” (See “Pro-abortion Alliance Submits 55-Page Wish List Memo to Obama Transition,” January 2009 *NRL News*, page 17.)

PPFA President Richards participated in a “health care summit” held at the White House on March 5, and used the opportunity to argue that the legislation must expand “access” to the services provided by her organization.

(PPFA clinics provided over 300,000 abortions in 2007, making the organization the nation’s largest abortion provider. At going rates, it appears that over one-third of PPFA-affiliated clinic income is generated by abortions.)

In a press release issued the same day, Richards said, “We must develop a health care reform plan, which ensures that every person has access to affordable, high-quality health care, including comprehensive reproductive health care, from a provider of their choice.”

Likewise, the National Abortion Federation (NAF), a “trade association” that represents hundreds of abortion providers, says that it “supports health care reform as a way to increase access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care, for all women.”

## **ACTION REQUEST:**

### ***What You Can Do Now***

Please take a few minutes to communicate with your two U.S. senators and with your representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, to urge them to oppose any federal “health care reform” legislation that does not explicitly exclude abortion.

Here are two of the ways that you can communicate with your federal representatives on this important issue:

***(1) Go to the Action Alert on the Legislative Action Center on the NRLC website at <http://www.capwiz.com/nrlc/home>***

There you will find a tool that makes it easy to send an appropriate message to both of your U.S. senators and to your U.S. House representative, urging them to vote against any “health care reform” legislation that does not explicitly exclude abortion. When you fill in your mailing address, your messages will automatically be sent by e-mail to your representatives in Congress.

***(2) Telephone the U.S. Senate switchboard at 202-224-3121, and ask to be connected to the office of one of your two U.S. senators.***

Once connected with the senator’s office, say that you want to be recorded as urging the senator to oppose any “health care reform” bill unless abortion is explicitly excluded. Tell the staff person that you wish to receive a letter explaining how the senator will vote on this issue, and make sure that the staff person takes down your mailing address for this purpose.

Then, hang up and repeat the process for your second U.S. senator. Finally, repeat the process for your representative in the U.S. House by calling 202-225-3121. If you don’t know who represents you in the U.S. House, just give the operator your zip code and you will be connected to the office of the correct House member.

NOTE: If you receive a letter or an e-mail or any other communication from one of your representatives in Congress regarding this matter, please forward a copy of that communication to:

National Right to Life  
Federal Legislation Department  
512-10th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004  
[Legfederal@aol.com](mailto:Legfederal@aol.com)  
fax: 202-347-3668

***For updates on this and other congressional issues, keep an eye on [www.nrlc.org](http://www.nrlc.org). Also, go to that Web site and sign up for e-mail alerts via the “Hot List.”***