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June 24, 2009

RE: Tri-Committee Health Reform Discussion Draft

Dear Member of Congress:

This is to express the strong opposition of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) to the Tri-Committee health care legislation that was released on June 19.

On July 17, 2007, Barack Obama pledged to the Planned Parenthood Action Fund that abortion mandates would be included in his health care reform proposals, saying that "in my mind, reproductive care is essential care, basic care, so it is at the center, the heart of the plan that I propose." Under his plan, he said, "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." As recently as late April 2009, the president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), the nation's largest abortion provider, affirmed that her organization would seek to use the health care reform legislation as "a platform" to achieve universal access to abortion.

Mr. Obama's pledges, and the PPFA goal, would be fulfilled by the Tri-Committee draft. The bill would create a so-called "Health Benefits Advisory Committee," with sweeping authority to decree, in concert with the Secretary of HHS, what services must be covered in both private and government health plans. Unless the legislation is amended to explicitly exclude abortion (as Congress did, for example, when it created the S-CHIP program in 1997), there is not the slightest doubt that this statutory language would result in mandatory abortion coverage.

The legislation would also authorize massive new subsidies for health coverage, without any language to prevent these subsidies from being used to fund abortion. **A vote for this legislation, as drafted, is a vote for tax-subsidized abortion on demand.**

The Tri-Committee bill also contains structural components that raise the most acute concerns regarding future rationing of life-saving medical care on the basis of disability and "quality of life" criteria. These rationing-related concerns will be examined in future communications from NRLC.

Thank you for your consideration of NRLC's objections to this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Douglas Johnson".

Douglas Johnson
Legislative Director