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NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE (NRLC) UPDATE ON HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION

U.S. HOUSE TO VOTE WITHIN DAYS ON WHETHER TO MAKE PRO-ABORTION SENATE HEALTH BILL "THE LAW OF THE LAND," AS HOUSE MEMBERS STUDY COMMUNICATIONS FROM NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE, U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, AND OTHERS

WASHINGTON -- In a significant development this week, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) made it clear (<http://bit.ly/bw031310>) that the House Democratic Leadership will force a vote soon on the Senate-passed health bill (H.R. 3590), including multiple abortion-related provisions strongly opposed by the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) and other pro-life organizations, and will not include pro-life language in any followup legislation.

In addition, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Ca.) intends to go forward on the basis, reportedly articulated by the Senate parliamentarian, that H.R. 3590 must be enacted into law before the Senate can consider any followup bill under fast-track "reconciliation" procedures. The *Washington Post* reported (March 13), "Pelosi shrugged off the ruling, accepting that the Senate bill would have to move first, and independently. 'It isn't going to make any difference except maybe in the mood that people are in,' she said Friday. 'The fact is that once we pass it [H.R. 3590] in the House, it's going to be the law of the land.'"

House members have received a March 5 memorandum from NRLC, posted here: (<http://www.nrlc.org/AHC/AbortionPolicyHCRBackgroundunder.pdf>), which summarizes NRLC substantive objections to multiple provisions of the Senate bill, and sketches the political implications of the upcoming roll call. NRLC said in part: "When all of the pro-abortion provisions are considered in total, the Senate bill is the most pro-abortion single piece of legislation that has ever come to the House floor for a vote, since *Roe v. Wade*. Any House member who votes for the Senate health bill is casting a career-defining pro-abortion vote. A House member who votes for the Senate bill would forfeit a plausible claim to pro-life credentials. No House member who votes for the Senate bill will be regarded, in the future, as having a record against federal funding of

abortion. All of those statements are true regardless of how many assurances or denials are disseminated by President Obama or by Speaker Pelosi, both of whom have sought throughout their political careers to undermine limits on government funding of abortion. House members who vote for the Senate bill will be accountable to their constituents for what the Senate bill contains."

On March 12, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops disseminated to congressional offices a four-page memorandum titled, "What's Wrong With the Senate Health Care Bill on Abortion? A Response to Professor Jost." This memorandum is a concise and cogent rebuttal to one recent tendentious attempt to minimize the multiple ways in which the Senate bill departs, in the pro-abortion direction, from the principles of current law and from the substance of the abortion-related provisions adopted by the House last year (especially the Stupak-Pitts Amendment). The memo explains how provisions of the Senate bill would result in direct federal funding of elective abortions, federal subsidies for plans that cover elective abortions (including some federally administered plans), and authority for federal officials to mandate inclusion of abortion coverage in private plans. It also notes that the Senate bill lacks the vital abortion nondiscrimination language (the so-called "Weldon" provision) found in the House-passed health bill. The USCCB memo is posted here:

<http://www.nrlc.org/AHC/USCCBRebuttalToJostOnHR3590.pdf>.

On March 11, the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention issued a national alert (<http://bit.ly/9ONKay>), urging citizens to contact their representatives in the House to urge the defeat of the Senate bill.

The results of polls conducted very recently in 12 congressional districts by *the polling companyTM, inc./WomanTrend*, dealing with the abortion-related aspects of the health care debate, are posted here: <http://bit.ly/SBAListpolls>.

Additional resources on the abortion-related controversies surrounding H.R. 3590 are posted on the NRLC website here: <http://www.nrlc.org/AHC/Index.html>

NRLC Legislative Director Douglas Johnson and Senior Legislative Counsel Susan Muskett are available to discuss these issues with bona fide journalists. Please contact the NRLC Communications Department at (202) 626-8825 or the Federal Legislation Department at (202) 626-8820 to arrange an interview.

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