



Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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Dear Member of Congress:

Soon the House of Representatives may consider the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments of 2007 (H.R. 1328). I am writing in strong support of an amendment that may be offered by Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) to codify current limits on federal abortion funding in this program, as the Senate has already done.

For thirty years, Congress has acted to ensure that taxpayers are not forced to subsidize abortions with their federal tax dollars. Since 1993 Congress has barred federal funding of abortion except in cases of rape, incest, or danger to the mother's life.

Throughout this period, chairmen of Appropriations committees and subcommittees from both parties have commented that such an important policy issue should ideally be resolved in authorizing legislation, rather than through appropriations riders. Thus Congress has written abortion funding restrictions into the authorizing legislation for major federal health programs as they are created or reauthorized (for example, the 1997 legislation establishing the State Children's Health Insurance program (SCHIP), 42 USC §1397jj(a)(16)).

Only in the Indian Health Service is funding of abortion on demand not directly prevented *either* by a rider to the relevant appropriations bill *or* by the authorizing legislation. Rather, the authorizing legislation contains a "reference" (25 USC §1676) to whatever limitation on abortion funding may exist in the Labor/HHS appropriations bill at any given time, although this program is not funded by the Labor/HHS bill. This unusual and awkward cross-referencing arrangement cries out for correction through a straightforward provision bringing this program into compliance with the policy in other federal health programs. The Senate has already approved such a provision, the Vitter amendment, and subsequently approved its version of this bill (S. 1200) by an overwhelming majority.

There may be an effort to block consideration of the Pitts amendment by bringing H.R. 1328 to the House floor under a "suspension of the rules" forbidding substantive debate and amendments. I urge you to oppose this effort to deprive Congress of its right and obligation to clarify federal policy on the government-subsidized killing of unborn children of Native American descent. Please join me in urging that the Pitts amendment be allowed an opportunity for debate and vote, and in supporting the amendment itself, to reaffirm a basic and longstanding congressional policy of not requiring U.S. taxpayers to fund elective abortions.

Sincerely,

Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops