

The Stupak/Pitts Amendment – A Giant Step Back For Women

The Stupak-Pitts amendment prohibits any coverage of abortion in the public option and prohibits anyone receiving a federal subsidy from purchasing a health insurance plan that includes abortion. It also prohibits private health insurance plans from offering abortion coverage to both subsidized and unsubsidized individuals in the exchange. To obtain abortion coverage, women would have to seek an insurance “rider” which, in the five states where coverage is only permitted by rider, does not exist. The Stupak/Pitts Amendment amounts to a ban on abortion coverage for millions of women that have coverage now. The amendment does NOT maintain the status quo on federal restrictions on abortion care, and violates President Obama’s principle that those who like the coverage they have right now can keep it.

The Capps Amendment is a *Compromise* That Maintains the Status Quo

The compromise, originally introduced during the House Energy and Commerce Committee by Rep. Lois Capps and also included in the Senate Finance Committee’s mark, resulted from a negotiation among Members with different positions on abortion. The compromise ensures no federal funds will be used to pay for abortion coverage, and sets up a system of segregating public funds and Americans’ own money. **While NFPRHA strongly believes no reproductive health care service should be excluded from health care reform, this compromise would ensure that the status quo is maintained – the government would not interfere in an American’s right to spend their own money on abortion coverage, and federal funds would not be used to cover abortion services.** This is exactly how the system currently functions under the annual Hyde Amendment.

Don’t Be Mistaken: Stupak/Pitts is a Devastating Setback for Women

The Stupak/Pitts Amendment will deny women the ability to purchase private health insurance that covers abortion with their own funds. The exchange promises to offer approximately 5.7 million women currently purchasing private insurance the ability to obtain coverage more affordably through the exchange. It will facilitate coverage for many of the 17 million women ages 18–64 who are currently uninsured. Small businesses (those with less than 100 employees) are also expected to enter the exchange in search of more affordable insurance. **None of the women entering the exchange will be able to obtain abortion coverage, including women who have that coverage in the individual or employer-based markets now.** If current trends continue and more and more employers are unable to offer insurance, yet more women will get their insurance through the exchange and be denied the abortion coverage many now have. **Stupak/Pitts would reinforce the restrictions that penalize low-income women and effectively ban abortion coverage for middle class women entering this new health care system.**

NFPRHA will not support a health care reform bill that contains the Stupak/Pitts amendment. It would discriminate against women and leave them worse off after health care reform than they are today.

November 2009