



Reproductive Health Services and Health Care Reform Legislation

To prevent antichoice activists from using health care reform as a vehicle to impose broad, new restrictions on access to abortion, Congressional leaders have proposed health reform bills that maintain the status quo on federal funding of abortion. The plan, known as the Capps compromise, would leave in place existing prohibitions on the use of federal Medicaid dollars to pay for abortion, except in cases of rape, incest or threat to the life of the mother. And it would allow private health insurance policies, most of which now cover abortion, to continue to do so as long as they pay for it without using public subsidies.

Raising Women's Voices believes that reproductive health care is basic care for women and that specific services should not be singled out for different treatment. The prohibition on using federal dollars to pay for abortion care jeopardizes the health of the most economically vulnerable women. It is fundamentally unjust and should be overturned.

Unfortunately, it appears likely that the Capps compromise will end up in the final bill. If it is enacted, *no federal funding or subsidies will be allowed for abortion services except in cases of rape, incest or threat to the life of the mother.* The long-standing Medicaid funding restriction on abortion, imposed annually as part of the appropriations process will not be affected. But antichoice legislators are still pushing to amend health reform to add the prohibition permanently in law which would make it harder to eliminate in the future.

Suggested talking points on reproductive health services in health care reform:

- 1. Reproductive health is a key component of women's health across the lifespan and should be treated like any other type of health care.** Research shows that reproductive health care is a key determinant of women's overall health across the lifespan. Reproductive health services are a part of the basic primary, preventive and acute care that women need, and health reform that treats women fairly will not exclude these services.
- 2. The vast majority of women with private health insurance currently have coverage for abortion, while in most states women covered by Medicaid do not except in cases of rape, incest or threat to the life of the mother.** Leaving this status quo in place preserves a policy that is damaging to the health of the most economically vulnerable women.
- 3. Antichoice activists are trying to use health reform legislation to impose new restrictions on access to abortion that go beyond the status quo prohibition on federal funding.** President Obama promised that people who like the health insurance they have will be able to keep it, and any restriction that takes abortion coverage away from women who have it now will violate that promise.
- 4. The Capps compromise would preserve the status quo and prohibit the use of federal dollars to pay for abortion services.** This would protect the ability of women who buy

insurance through a health insurance exchange to buy a policy that covers abortion care, even if the cost of their premium is subsidized by public money. Under the compromise, insurance plans that participate in the exchange would be required to segregate public subsidy money from private premium dollars to ensure that subsidies won't be used to pay for abortion services. It would not change existing restrictions on Medicaid funding of abortion.

Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
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