

Christians Ramp Up Opposition to Health Care Bill

✖ Conservative Christian leaders are ramping up their opposition to a health care reform bill that they say opens the door to government-funded abortion.

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins hosted a press conference today on Capitol Hill calling on Congress to oppose the reform measure that he said amounts to a government takeover of health care.

“President Obama and his liberal allies in Congress have ignored the moral, ethical and financial dangers of this plan,” Perkins said. “The takeover will suffocate small business owners with incalculable new taxes. And it would mandate taxpayer-funded abortion, abortifacient drugs and limit end-of-life care. ... From the inevitability of rationed care to diminishing human dignity, the president’s plan amounts to a prescription for a health care disaster.”

Perkins was joined by Bishop Harry Jackson, leader of the High Impact Leadership Coalition; Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Women for America; Doug Johnson, legislative director of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC); and Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life of America.

Republican House leaders including Rep. Joe Pitts of Pennsylvania, Rep. Mike Pence of Indiana, Rep. Christopher H. Smith of New Jersey, Rep. Jeff Fortenberry of Nebraska, Trent Franks of Arizona and Rep. Doug Lamborn of Colorado also participated.

The press conference is being followed with a Webcast tonight designed to mobilize a grassroots lobbying effort against the

health care reform bill. Hosted by Perkins, the Webcast begins at 8:30 p.m. and will feature Republican Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas, as well as Jackson, Rep. Pence and Johnson of the NRLC.

In an interview with CBS News last week, President Obama called the abortion debate over the health care bill a “distraction,” saying that though he is pro-choice, Washington has a history of not financing abortions as part of government funded health care.

But pro-life leaders don’t trust the Obama administration not to define abortion as a basic public health care benefit, and their lobbying efforts against it are some of the most aggressive in recent years.

The Susan B. Anthony List has mobilized pro-life activists to send more than 100,000 letters to Congress urging them to exclude abortion from any national health care reform effort. In a similar effort, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) gathered 65,000 signatures within the last week for a national petition that also calls on Congress to exclude abortion as a mandatory health benefit.

“It’s time that Congress gets the message: When it comes to mandatory health benefits, Americans don’t want their tax dollars used—or force private insurance plans—to fund abortion,” said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the ACLJ. “We will continue to push for a legislative remedy that explicitly excludes abortion from any government mandated coverage or taxpayer funded health plan.”

The ACLJ also released a memo to House members today saying it is “vital” that any health care reform plan exclude abortion. The group warned that the “pro-abortion healthcare push” could jeopardize existing state abortion laws.

“Portions of the proposal would allow the federal plan and its administrators to determine that state laws restricting

abortion, such as parental notification laws or informed consent laws, 'prevent the application of a requirement' of the plan," the ACLJ memo stated. "In such instances the requirements of state law would be preempted. Such an outcome needs to be avoided and state laws respected."

Although many Christians oppose the health reform bill because of its ambiguity on abortion, other leaders say the bill is dangerous even without those concerns.

In a statement issued today, prophetic minister Rick Joyner—founder of MorningStar Ministries in Fort Mill, S.C., and a member of the newly formed Freedom Federation—called the health care plan "sinister." He said the bill is "obviously designed to put the authority to determine who lives and dies in America in the hands of government bureaucrats."

He said the House measure, H.R. 3200, has the potential for "totalitarian control to be imposed on America to a degree that Hitler and Stalin could not have even imagined," pointing to provisions in the bill that he says would require government access to personal information, including banks accounts.

"Call me an alarmist and I will agree with you—I am going to do my best to sound the alarm against evil in every way that I can," Joyner wrote.

He called on Christians to stop the legislation by lobbying against it and then voting out of office any Congressional leaders who support it. "We can expect persecution for standing against such a bold and obvious attack of the spirit of death, but no Christian should fear death, and no Christian will want to live in the world that is now taking shape," Joyner said.

Meanwhile, a group of left-leaning Christians today launched a campaign that urges Congress to pass comprehensive health reform legislation this year.

Organized by PICO National Network, Faith in Public Life, Sojourners and Catholic in Alliance for the Common Good, the campaign began with a prayer rally today in Washington, D.C., and includes lobbying events nationwide, town hall meetings and distribution of health care reform guides.

The lobbying effort targets Senate Finance Committee members, moderate and freshman Democrats, and moderate Republicans to support the healthcare bill.