

Obama Says Health Plan Critics 'Bearing False Witness'

✖ President Obama on Wednesday accused opponents of his controversial health reform plan of “bearing false witness” during a conference call with faith leaders who represent what is being called the “religious left.”

During the 10-minute call, organized by the left-leaning Faith in Public Life as part of a 40-day campaign to promote health care reform, Obama criticized opponents for propagating “ludicrous ideas” about the plan, including claims that the bill calls for death panels for the elderly, seeks to insure illegal aliens and would fund abortion.

“This notion that somehow we are setting up death panels that would decide on whether elderly people get to live or die. That is just an extraordinary lie,” Obama said.

He said the idea that “this is all going to mean government funding of abortion” is “not true.”

“These are all fabrications that have been put out there in order to discourage people from meeting what I consider to be a core ethical and moral obligation—and that is that we look out for one another. I am my brother’s keeper; I am my sister’s keeper,” Obama said. “In the wealthiest nation on earth right now, we are neglecting to live up to that call.”

Obama said the plan would simply help lower costs and ensure health coverage for all Americans.

Pro-life leaders were quick to say the president's claims about abortion were misleading and continued to call on lawmakers to explicitly exclude abortion from the health bill.

In statements released Wednesday night, the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) and the Family Research Council (FRC) argued that the Capps Amendment, adopted in late July by the House Energy and Commerce Committee, would allow abortion coverage in the public health plan and subsidizes health plans that cover abortion.

FRC also noted that every amendment introduced to exclude abortion from the House bill had been struck down. (See the FRC's "Seven Reasons Abortion Is in the Health Care Overhaul" and the NRLC's factsheet on abortion coverage in the health bill.)

"President Obama has fully demonstrated his commitment to fulfilling his stated goal of funding abortion, articulated in last year's presidential campaign," FRC President Tony Perkins said. "He is now attempting to obscure this commitment because of an overwhelmingly public backlash. He fully intends to fund or subsidize abortion services in the health care overhaul."

In a blog Thursday, CBN News White House Correspondent David Brody said the president's comments Wednesday may have ramifications beyond the health bill.

"When you come out on a FAITH conference call and use the words 'bearing false witness,' that is a direct slap down of conservative Evangelical groups," Brody wrote. "You can debate the intention behind his words, but it really doesn't matter because it is really only how it is received that matters. In essence he was calling these Christian groups a bunch of liars. It's a serious charge. By ratcheting up the rhetoric, the president just amped up the fight against him and opened up a can of worms."

Organizers said Wednesday's teleconference drew 140,000

listeners. The president's address can be replayed at the "40 Minutes for Health Reform" Web site.