

Pro-Life Groups Gear Up to Fight Sebelius Confirmation



Pro-life leaders have vowed to oppose Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' confirmation as Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, saying her abortion record is extreme and out of touch with mainstream America.

Nominated yesterday by President Obama, the two-term Democratic governor has worked to expand health care in her Republican-leaning state and has a reputation for forging alliances across party lines. But pro-life leaders say Sebelius, 60, is unfit to lead a department tasked with expanding health-care access because of her "radical" abortion record and ties to late-term abortion provider George Tiller, who faces 19 charges of illegal abortions.

"We are working to raise a unified voice in the pro-life/pro-family community against the confirmation of Gov. Sebelius," Operation Rescue President Troy Newman said. "Sebelius' close connections to the abortion lobby, especially late-term abortionist George Tiller, make her unfit to serve."

Pro-life groups say Tiller, who is due to stand trial later this month, has contributed to Sebelius and her PAC, the Bluestem Fund, and was honored during a fundraiser at the governor's mansion in 2007. They also criticize Sebelius for vetoing legislation that would have allowed the secretary of the Department of Health and Environment to disclose information on late-term abortion providers.

Sebelius, who is Roman Catholic, said she is personally pro-life but doesn't believe criminalizing abortion would reduce the number abortions.

"If we truly wish to reduce the number of abortions further, we need to work together to truly promote a culture of life, by helping women and families get the support they need when facing unexpected pregnancies and to continue to reduce the number of abortions," Sebelius said in 2006. "Health care, child care, job opportunities, affordable housing-they are all the building blocks of a culture of life and we can use them to build a future where abortion is extremely rare." (Read Sebelius' statements on abortion.)

Sebelius' views have rankled leaders within her church. Last year Roman Catholic Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann asked the governor to refrain from receiving communion until she took "the necessary steps for amendment of her life, which would include a public repudiation of her previous efforts and actions in support of laws and policies sanctioning abortion."

Yet some pro-life leaders, including Roman Catholic Sen. Sam Brownback, welcomed her nomination. In a statement Brownback released yesterday with fellow Kansas Republican Sen. Pat Roberts, the pro-life senators said they looked forward to working with Sebelius on issues important to their state. Although they did not mention abortion, the senators said they are "committed to ensuring that every American has access to quality, affordable, and personalized health care" and "strongly oppose any move toward one-size-fits-all medicine."

"We also oppose the introduction of a new public insurance plan option that will reduce quality and choice by crowding-out the private insurance market, and we will work to preserve the healthcare options on which Kansans depend," they said. (Read the senators' full statement.)

Meanwhile, 12 evangelical leaders-including Florida megachurch pastor Joel Hunter and the Rev. Sammy Rodriguez, a Pentecostal minister and president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference-also issued a statement supporting

Sebelius' nomination. They point to the fact that abortions dropped 10 percent in Kansas while Sebelius was governor, and say she has proven her commitment to life issues by increasing adoption funding and incentives, making prenatal care more widely available and signing into law a bill that calls for killers of pregnant women to be charged with two murders.

"Her record and her relationships with leaders in both parties are proof that pro-choice and pro-life leaders can work together to advance a pro-family agenda," the statement read. "The governor, who is by all accounts a person of deep faith, deserves a fair hearing in Congress and in the public square. Efforts to discredit her will no doubt arise, but we hope that such tactics will not succeed in taking focus off of her record of reducing abortions and supporting women and families in Kansas-and the task that lies ahead of us all: working together to improve health care and reduce the number of abortions in America."

However, many pro-life Christians see Sebelius' appointment as another sign that the Obama administration is not seeking a consensus on abortion. Last week, an HHS official indicated that the Obama administration would take steps toward rescinding a law that protects health-care professionals from having to perform medical services that violate their moral or religious beliefs. And within the first days of taking office,

Obama repealed the Mexico City Policy, which had prevented taxpayer dollars from being used to fund international organizations that perform or promote abortions abroad.

"The nomination of Kathleen Sebelius for Secretary of Health and Human Services is further evidence of something gone terribly wrong for those seeking consensus on the abortion issue, especially the president," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the pro-life Susan B. Anthony List. "He speaks of finding 'common ground' on abortion, but then he makes a

series of decisions that comprise the biggest overreach since the 1973 Supreme Court wiped every legal protection for unborn children off the books in the Roe v. Wade decision and the Doe v. Bolton companion decision.”

The Rev. Patrick J. Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition based in Washington, D.C., called Sebelius “a divisive and extremist candidate” whose

abortion record is out of step with mainstream America.

“The Christian Defense Coalition vows a vocal, public and national campaign to prevent a person who so devalues human life and social justice to become HHS Secretary,” Mahoney said, adding that Sebelius’ nomination could pave the way for taxpayer-funded abortions. “If the president is looking for a fight with the pro-life and pro-family movement, he certainly is going to get one.”

Rodriguez said though he “stands committed to a 100 percent pro-life platform,” he said it was unlikely that President Obama would have selected a pro-life HHS secretary. “Gov. Sebelius has stated, and in her own state demonstrated, a

commitment to abortion reduction,” Rodriguez told *Charisma*. “As a pro-life supporter and advocate, I would rather have someone at HHS who supports abortion reduction than someone who is a defacto spokesperson for increased abortions or uber/hyper pro-abortion advocacy.”

Newman, however, is calling on pro-life advocates to ask their senators to oppose Sebelius’ confirmation. “We urge our supporters to begin contacting their senators now to voice opposition to Sebelius’ confirmation,” he said.