

Several Pro-Life Groups Decry 'Historic' Health Reform Bill

Several pro-life groups responded to the Senate's passage of landmark health care reform legislation Thursday morning with calls for more restrictive abortion language in the final measure.

President Obama called the vote "historic" and said it brings the nation "toward the end of nearly a century-long struggle to reform America's health care system."

If the reforms pass, the legislation will be "the most important piece of social legislation since the Social Security act passed in the 1930s and the most important reform of our health care system since Medicare passed in the 1960s," President Obama said.

But pro-life groups including the Family Research Council, Traditional Values Coalition, Susan B. Anthony List and the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) decried the

the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that passed in a 60-39 party-line vote, saying it does not do enough to prevent government funding for abortion.

"As efforts begin to work out the differences between the Senate and House bills, we encourage pro-life members of the U.S. House ... to once again stand-up and protect the sanctity of human life," said Jay Sekulow, Chief Counsel of

the ACLJ. "The final bill must include real protections for the unborn. And it must offer the American people a plan that is sensible and affordable."

"Without significant changes, Congress should reject this government-run, pro-abortion effort," he added. "It's time to stop the political deal-making and posturing and listen to the American people."

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins said most Americans oppose federal funding for abortion. He pointed to a recent Quinnipiac poll that found 72 percent of respondents favor Democratic Rep. Bart Stupak's amendment prohibiting abortion funding in the House bill.

"House and Senate conferees would do well to heed that warning when they come together to iron out their differences with the final bill, else this bill could collapse because of it," Perkins said.

Unlike the House bill, the Senate measure allows states to opt out of providing abortion coverage. But some pro-life advocates say taxpayers in states that opt-out would still be paying for abortions in states that allow abortion coverage.

Although Stupak has vowed to oppose a House-Senate compromise that allows abortion funding, other pro-life Democrats have indicated support for the Senate abortion language, *Time* magazine reported.

Negotiations between the House and Senate are to begin in January. Observers say a compromise is unlikely before

February.

If the health reform legislation is signed into law without substantial revisions, attorney Mathew D. Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel, said his organization may file a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the bill.

In addition to allowing abortion funding, he says the health reform legislation exceeds Congress' authority by requiring that all Americans own health insurance as part of a proposed national health insurance program overseen by the government but offered through private insurers. The program would also prevent insurance companies from dropping patients who get sick.

"We believe it's unconstitutional," Staver said. "It exceeds Congress' authority to pass health care that requires everyone to carry insurance coverage and that penalizes employers that do not provide the level of coverage that the bill requires."

He said Congress has the authority to regulate interstate commerce, but he believes the health reform legislation goes beyond that scope. "Here they're trying to regulate every individual, including employers, which do not have any interstate commerce component, and that's beyond Congress' power to regulate," he said.

Pro-life leaders who oppose the health reform measure

are also looking to the 2010 mid-term elections, when they hope to rally voters to unseat members of Congress who support abortion funding in the legislation.