

Bearing False Witness

✖ Last week the administration showed just how desperate it is to pass its health care plan. Despite President Barack Obama ignoring the National Day of Prayer and failing to join a church in D.C., he mustered enough faith to call on the faith community to participate in a national conference call. Although 140,000 people logged in, this is a paltry number when one considers that evangelical voters number in excess of 65 million people and nearly 80 percent of Americans claim to be Christians.

Another sign of the administration's desperation was the tone that the president's handlers encouraged him to take. He seemed to depart from his typical magnanimous spirit. In fact the call included divisive name-calling by the president, accusing his opponents of "bearing false witness" – religious speak for lying.

Many conservative leaders were shocked at the way the administration is using the same techniques that they criticized the Bush administration for using. In essence, the president sought to woo Christian leaders to function as foot soldiers in his war for health care. In fact, the president himself has taken shots at Bush and others for manipulating the faithful – not to mention that books like *Blinded by Might* and *Tempting Faith* have castigated the Republicans for deceiving fawning ministers by naming names and showing where all the "bodies were buried" in the religious, political game. Worst of all, scores of books have been written by progressive ministers that say there should be a separation of church and state. Not one soldier in the army of liberals has criticized the president for the tenor of the conference call. The hypocrisy is sickening.

My take on the conference call is that it was an attempt to baptize something evil into a new name with new packaging.

Church leaders have been asked by the president to call universal health care a “moral imperative.” Projecting universal health care as the only moral imperative is as sensible as calling a person born in the U.S. a native Australian because he visited Sydney once. It is certain that every judicious person in the nation wants medical care for the least, the last, and the left out – the goal is admirable, yet sometimes evil is done by those with good motives who lack long-term vision.

The crux of the health care question is not whether we want to help everyone, it is how we help everyone. Personally I do not want a socialistic system fraught with inefficiencies. Others are wary of crippling a system that is currently saving millions of lives every day. This argument is not theoretical – delay or denial of essential services will spell death for thousands. Aren’t the lives of every American important?

Where does that leave us? Unfortunately the plan as it is being fashioned is patently evil. It has several major blemishes. These blemishes are three fold – the moral impact of denied service, funding of abortion, and making employers (including churches) pay for a system that administers death.

First of all the idea that abortion will be paid for is reprehensible. Despite the president’s declarations, his henchmen have refused to add amendments to the bill, which would specifically rule out state paid abortion. The Capps amendment, which passed the House Energy and Commerce committee, clearly states that abortion can be covered under the public option and must be covered under at least one private plan in each region that is in the exchange. While it’s a precise point, the other side keeps pointing to the Capps amendment saying that it says no ‘funds’ can go for abortions ... but it violates the Hyde amendment by providing government subsidies for health plans that cover abortion whether the tax dollars actually pay for it or the private

premiums pay for the abortion.

Experts tell me that the Capps amendment has an accounting gimmick that makes it look like only private funds would pay for the abortion, but it clearly says that the government public plan and private plans may, and some must, cover abortion.

Next Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md.: admitted at a Senate HELP Committee meeting the inclusion of abortion in the amendment at an exchange between her and Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, on July 9. Here is the exchange:

Hatch: Madam Chairman, would you be willing to put some language in [about] not including abortion services? Then I think you would have more support.

Mikulski : ... No, I would not, uh, be willing to do that at this time.

Even the Obama administration includes abortion in its definition of reproductive health care. At an April 23, House Foreign Affairs Committee, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated, "Reproductive health care includes access to abortion."

President Obama's conference call with the religious leaders last week was hypocritical – the ultimate step towards double standards in politics. Most people believe that health care reform is an important moral issue. However big government, alone, cannot reform health care. In fact, it is not the proper mechanism for such a reform.

The community, including the church, has to play a role in health care reform. Historically churches and other faith-based charitable organizations have taken an active role in the development of hospitals and organizations that supply care for the sick.

In 2005, when hurricane Katrina dramatically altered the lives of many people, blacks in particular, it was the church and other non-governmental organizations such as The Red Cross, The Southern Baptist Convention, Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army and Catholic Charities, to name a few, who were very instrumental in the efforts to respond to this emergency. Health care reform is an emergency, however, government intervention, alone, cannot adequately address it. The community and the faith community, in particular, must play an active role in the reform efforts.

Something about this health care plan is rotten and someone is bearing false witness. Only time will tell who it is.