

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

September 28, 2009 at 10:33am

The Midterms & Health Care & Nukes

by Michael Sean Winters

NCR Today

Politico.com has a really great article about the re-election prospects of Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln. A Democrat, Lincoln survived re-election in 2004 when the state went heavily for George W. Bush but Republicans think that the anti-health care reform movement may make her vulnerable next year. "This race will be more about the policies of Barack Obama than it will be about the policies and positions that Blanche Lincoln is talking about on a daily basis," said GOP campaign adviser. That adviser is wrong. Incumbent Senators like Lincoln have had plenty of time (she has served for twelve years in the Senate) to carve out independent identities with their electorate and only a tidal wave will swamp that independent identity. There was such a tidal wave in 1994, when the GOP took control of the House for the first time in decades. But, that was after the Democrats failed to enact health care reform and this year it is obvious that before Christmas the President will sign something that comes close to achieving universal health insurance. Once people start realizing they can no longer be denied coverage for a pre-existing condition ? and when the sky does not fall - they will view health care reform in a far more favorable light.

There is another big difference between now and 1994. Groups like Faith in Public Life have been busy creating a pro-Obama narrative that did not exist in 1994 for the Clintons. The group's latest initiative is called the Two Futures Project and it is working to build support for Obama's effort to reduce nuclear stockpiles. This effort is manifestly bipartisan, backed by people as diverse as Ronald Reagan's Secretary of State George Shultz and Sojourners' founder Rev. Jim Wallis. And, it is targeted at evangelicals. I lived in Little Rock for a few months, and in Arkansas, people go to church. The city is ringed with megachurches and they brook no competition: the suburban malls are closed on Sunday mornings. You may find opposition to Obama's health care plan among the worshippers at those churches, but you will not find the vitriol that you saw at the Tea Party protests. And people whose pastors praise the President for his initiative on nuclear weapons will be less likely to demonize him, still less his congressional allies, on something like health care.

The only way for Democrats to guarantee that they will lose next year's midterms is to fail to pass a health care bill. And, the surest way to do that is to fail to ensure that there is no abortion funding in the final legislation. If the USCCB signs off, candidates like Sen. Lincoln can respond to the charge that the reform is radical by saying, "Even the Catholic bishops support this bill and no one has ever accused them of being socialists." Re-electing Sen. Lincoln is not why the bishops should support the reform, but it is why the Democrats should heed the call of the bishops to keep abortion-funding out of the bill. The bishops' imprimatur is a strong card the Democrats want.

Source URL (retrieved on 03/23/2018 - 8:19pm): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/midterms-health-care-nukes>

Links:

[1] <https://www.ncronline.org/forward/join?clickSource=end-article>

[2] <https://www.ncronline.org/node/160616>