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Stupak Still in Negotiations

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NCR Today

According to a report at Politico.com, negotiations between the House leadership and Congressman Bart Stupak are still on-going. While it looks increasingly like the Speaker will whip up the necessary votes for the measure, the report says that they want the dozen or so members committed to the Stupak approach to abortion restrictions on board.

I have never doubted that if push comes to shove, Speaker Pelosi would throw her pro-choice allies under the bus if that was what was needed to pass the bill. She did as much in November. But, this raises an interesting specter for pro-health care forces. Will they be willing to jettison their commitment to abortion rights in order to pass the health care bill?

I have argued that the Senate's abortion language is sufficiently restrictive to warrant support for the bill. Indeed, there does not appear to be much of a difference between the two bills on this score. But, the argument works both ways. Just as I have criticized Stupak for risking the overall health care bill for minor differences on abortion, I would criticize pro-choice Democrats who would refuse to pass a bill that includes the Stupak language. Additionally, it is doubtful the Republicans would sign on to support the Stupak Amendment if doing so meant final passage of the bill. They did so in November. It is far from clear they would do so again. Finally, it will be interesting to see how the USCCB reacts if Stupak gets a conditional agreement, for example, that his concerns will be addressed in a subsequent vote. If the pro-life hero Stupak signs off, will the bishops?

So, stay tuned. This just may get curiouser and curiouser.

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