

Pro-Life Politics

Michael Sean Winters | Dec. 14, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

[Politico.com has an article](#) [1] about how the state legislative gains made by pro-life candidates may affect various laws regarding abortion in the coming years. For example, there are now fifteen states, up from ten, in which the legislatures and the governor's mansions are in pro-life hands. Various state laws are being introduced to restrict the procedure, or to require that a woman be shown an ultrasound of her child in utero before making the decision to have an abortion. All these laws will be resisted by pro-choice groups, but their resistance is not just to the laws, it is to the facts.

There has long been an unwillingness among pro-choice groups to actually face the grim reality of what an abortion is. The word "fetus" is just odd enough from quotidian consideration to serve as a euphemism, obstructing the reality of what abortion does and to whom it does it.

In the immediate aftermath of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, Daniel Callahan wrote an article in *Commonweal* about the moral coarsening the abortion debate had occasioned. "I am willing - no, well prepared - to grant her that right [to an abortion] under law," Callahan wrote. "I only ask that the society that grants this right be prepared to look with unblinking eye at just what it is doing, not deceiving itself for one moment about even one aspect of what a granting of that right does...[I predict] in the best 1984 tradition, a reconstruction of history. This is done by creating a highly charged mythology of male repression, or religious persecution, or puritanical fanaticism (i.e., whichever cue serves best at the moment to induce popular frenzy)...and, not incidentally, values are reconstructed by making the value of a potential human life being dependent upon being wanted by its mother." Sadly, Callahan was prescient.

The Politico article mentions in passing that one of the things legislatures can do is bar any plans that cover abortion from the health care exchanges that will be set up under the new health care law. So far, only a handful of states have taken steps to bar such plans. As I wrote at the time, this is a proper avenue for pro-life groups to consider one that will, in the event, actually make America's health care system less hospitable to abortion than it was before the health care law was passed.

Even our friends at First Things have acknowledged that the current system of entirely private insurance with little government regulation has resulted in the wide availability of insurance plans that cover abortion. Insurance companies have an incentive here: abortions are cheaper than a full-term pregnancy and birth. [An article by Richard Stith](#) [2] calls for pro-life groups to resist the GOP call for repeal of "Obamacare" because of the possibilities the new law offered to restrict abortion coverage.

Stith fails to note one other aspect of the new law which will have even greater pro-life consequences. The health care reform requires anyone buying a plan that covers abortion to write a separate check for that part of the plan that covers abortion. This requirement applies not only to plans subsidized by the federal government but to all plans purchased on the exchanges. I suspect people will tire quickly of having to write another check every month. And, I suspect the insurance companies will not like all the accounting these separate checks will require.

I would have no objection to Congress passing an amendment to the health care law that codifies the original Stupak Amendment. I do not see that it has the votes in the Senate to pass, but it is worth the effort. But, I also believe the current restrictions on the use of federal funds for abortion are sufficient. If we want to make those restrictions tighter, fine by me, but what we should not do, must not do, is think it necessary to repeal the entire health care law because of its abortion provisions. Even a conservative like Stith recognizes that repeal would be a step back for the pro-life cause.

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[1] <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1210/46330.html>

[2] <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2010/11/reforming-the-pro-choice-market>