

# THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION



Richard Land, D.Phil. (*Oxon.*), President

November 6, 2009

The Honorable John Boehner  
House Republican Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Republican Leader Boehner:

We are deeply concerned about the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962). The vast majority of Southern Baptists cannot possibly support many of the bill's features. Primary among these concerns are the bill's lack of pro-life protections, creation of a public health plan to compete with private plans, and overall exorbitant cost.

First, H.R. 3962 authorizes federal funding of abortion in the public plan and federal subsidies for private plans that cover abortion, a violation of the consciences of millions of Southern Baptists and other Americans. At the very least, protections must include explicit language excluding elective abortion services. A proposed amendment by Congressman Ellsworth purported to restrict federal funding of abortion is insufficient. The Ellsworth Amendment would still permit the government to fund abortion by simply contracting with third-party entities to dispense funds for abortions. This deceptive attempt to allay pro-life concerns must be rejected.

Second, the bill's creation of a public health plan will drive other insurers out of business and cause many people to lose their current health insurance. Drastic cuts to Medicare and Medicare Advantage benefits would also severely impact millions of seniors, according to the Congressional Budget Office. And without specific language stating otherwise, the government's attempts to control costs could lead to rationing of care and denial of life-saving treatments.

Finally, the cost of H.R. 3962 is troublesome. The CBO places its cost estimate at \$1.055 trillion when factoring coverage expansions, a figure that could reach \$1.3 trillion. To help pay for the plan, the bill would raise taxes by more than \$700 billion, according to the CBO and the Joint Committee on Taxation, including taxing individuals who do not purchase health insurance and businesses that do not offer a health care plan following government dicta.

As long as these problems remain, we will oppose H.R. 3962 and any similar health care legislation. Compounding our concerns, Speaker Pelosi and the Rules Committee will allow members to offer only a few, if any, amendments. Given the gravity of health care reform and our aforementioned concerns, we urge members to oppose the rule that will guide floor debate on the bill if it severely restricts members' rights to offer amendments. We also urge a vote against the bill itself, because it is so deeply flawed.

While we support efforts to improve our current health care system, we believe Congress should work to enact acceptable health care reformation, not objectionable transformation. Please be advised that we will notify our members of the outcome of these votes, so they can stay abreast of developments in this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

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