



Abortion Coverage Expanded for Women in Military

Abortion advocates have won a significant victory in their efforts to make the murderous procedure available to all women at all times. In late December Congress dismantled the decades-long ban on the federal funding of abortions for female military personnel in the case of rape or incest. Since 1981, insurance coverage for abortion has only been allowed in the military under the context of saving the life of the mother. But under the Democrat-pushed provision included in the National Defense Authorization Act, women in the U.S. military will now be able to cite rape or incest to use their health insurance to obtain the procedure.



Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) introduced the abortion measure in late November, insisting in a speech on the Senate floor that it was unfair to deny women in the military access to “reproductive health care.” While the Senate unanimously passed the amendment in early December, the version of the Defense bill considered by the Republican-controlled House did not include the abortion amendment.

But a bipartisan committee that included Senate Armed Services Chairman Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Senator John McCain (R-Ariz.), House Armed Services Chairman Buck McKeon (R-Calif.), and Representative Adam Smith (D-Wash.) soon remedied the impasse, and on December 18 the committee presented a version of the bill with the abortion measure that both chambers quickly approved.

“With the inclusion of my amendment in the final defense bill, we’ve made an important step to restoring equity to military service women,” Shaheen exulted in a statement. “After three decades of a policy that discriminated against women who put their lives on the line for us, I’m proud of my colleagues in both Houses of Congress and of both parties who are going to allow us to right this wrong.”

Shaheen called it an issue of “equality” for the military’s estimated 214,000 active duty female personnel. “Women in the military should have the same health coverage as the civilians they protect,” she said.

But Tom McClusky of the Family Research Council, which has been at the forefront of protecting both women and their unborn children from the horrors of abortion, called the move an “extremely disappointing” failure on the part of pro-life leadership, contending that “we’ve allowed the other side to frame the debate entirely in terms advantageous to helping women. Everyone wants to help women. But we also want what happens to the child to be part of the debate. The child is a human being.”

Marie Hilliard of the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia agreed, contending that while erstwhile pro-life legislators were partly to blame for letting the military abortion ban slip away, pro-life activists were complicit in the defeat for not contacting their legislators to remind them that “there are



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two victims or potential victims when there is a pregnancy resulting from rape or incest — the woman and the child.” Hillard told the [National Catholic Register](#): “It is a tragedy when a woman is sexually assaulted, but the unborn child should not be treated as a perpetrator. The child is innocent and should not become a victim too.”

The *National Catholic Register* reported that since 1976 all funding bills have included an amendment banning federal funding for abortions except to save the life of a pregnant woman. “The amendment is named after its initial proponent, Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois,” noted the Catholic paper. “During the Clinton administration, congressional Democrats forced the rape and incest exemptions into the Hyde Amendments, and these have remained in place. But they were never added to military appropriation bills until now.”

McClusky insisted that passage of the amendment represents a failure by the entire pro-life movement. “We all have to take responsibility,” he said. “If we point fingers, the pointing would go full circle.”

The *National Catholic Register* noted that some pro-life legislators caved in to pressure from Senator McCain to jettison their convictions when voting on the defense bill. Representative of pro-life lawmakers surrendering to McCain’s intimidation was Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), who previously had a 100 percent voting record from National Right to Life.

During an appearance on *Fox News Sunday* in late November, McCain justified his pressure tactics, declaring that while “I can state my position on abortion,” it was important to “leave the issue alone when we are in the kind of economic situation and, frankly, national security situation that we’re in.”

Gene Rudd, vice president of the Christian Medical Association, pointed out that among other dangers, expanding abortion coverage in the military will be a subtle threat to military readiness, as qualified pro-life doctors will be less inclined to serve where they would be required to violate their convictions. “Morale will suffer among those already serving,” he told [LifeNews.com](#). “Morale is a key component of military effectiveness. Furthermore, just as we have seen a marked decrease in young doctors entering OB/Gyn training for fear of being forced to do abortion, this requirement will discourage young doctors from joining the military.”

As for the argument that the amendment is all about protecting women, Ryan Bomberger of the [Radiance Foundation](#), who was himself conceived in rape, pointed out to [LifeSiteNews.com](#) that if proponents of the measure wanted to protect women, “why not include some sort of provision including harsher punishments for the attacker? Why not go after the men who commit these horrible crimes?” He emphasized that “abortion is not care. Care doesn’t end in death.”



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