



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 13, 2010

Pro-Lifers Score a Victory With Pitts Appointment

Conservatives may have lost some battles for committee chairmen in the incoming Republican-dominated House of Representatives, but they are making up for it when it comes to subcommittees. For economic conservatives there is the appointment of Rep. Ron Paul of Texas to head the Financial Services Subcommittee on Domestic Monetary Policy and Technology. Social conservatives, meanwhile, scored a victory with the selection of the staunchly pro-life Rep. Joseph Pitts of Pennsylvania as chairman of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health.



Paul, too, is pro-life, but his subcommittee will have little involvement in abortion-related matters, while Pitts's subcommittee will have jurisdiction over such abortion minefields as private health insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, the Food and Drug Administration, and the National Institutes of Health.

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Then there's the matter of ObamaCare. Pitts is perhaps most famous for coauthoring the Stupak-Pitts Amendment, which would have strictly forbidden the federal government from paying for abortions under the healthcare law. The amendment, which passed the House, was stripped from the final bill. Stupak voted for the bill anyway, succumbing to White House pressure and a promise from President Obama to issue an executive order banning federal funding of abortions under certain portions of ObamaCare. Pitts held firm and voted against the bill.

Pitts remains convinced that ObamaCare has the potential to open the floodgates of federal funding for abortion, saying, "The new health care law is riddled with loopholes that allow taxpayer subsidies for coverage that includes abortion." He has good reason to believe this: Douglas Johnson, the legislative director for the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), has submitted a 24-page sworn affidavit attesting to a variety of ways in which ObamaCare does indeed authorize such subsidies — authorizations that Johnson contends "would have been closed by enactment of the Stupak-Pitts or Nelson-Hatch amendments." (Nelson-Hatch was the Senate version of Stupak-Pitts offered by Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). It was rejected by the Senate.)

[According to the New York Times](#), although Pitts's best-case scenario is a complete repeal of the healthcare law, "short of that goal, Mr. Pitts said he was determined to ban federal subsidy payments to any health insurance plans that include coverage of abortion — a benefit now offered by many private health plans." Considering that the federal government is expected to spend in excess of \$450 billion on insurance subsidies between 2014 and 2019, it would be wise to get a blanket ban on abortion funding in place as soon as possible. To that end, says the *Times*, Pitts "has introduced a bill that would, with extremely limited exceptions, ban the use of federal subsidies 'to pay for any abortion, or to cover any part of the costs of any health plan that includes coverage of abortion.'"



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The good news is that Pitts's bill has the support of incoming House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio, who said, "There is no cause more noble than the defense of human life." Both Pitts and Boehner have 100 percent ratings from NRLC and, conversely, zeroes from Planned Parenthood. NRLC and the Susan B. Anthony List, another pro-life organization, hailed Pitts's appointment, while Planned Parenthood condemned it, saying that Pitts is "as anti-choice as a member of Congress can be."

Boehner's support may be particularly important since the incoming chairman of the full Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Fred Upton of Michigan, has been a bit more willing to compromise on his pro-life principles. Upton, writes the *Times*, "voted to allow the use of federal money for some types of embryonic stem cell research" and "has worked with the Michigan affiliate of Planned Parenthood on some issues. He voted against a Republican proposal to cut off federal money for Planned Parenthood last year, while Mr. Pitts voted for it." As a result of such compromises, Upton has earned an 83 percent rating from NRLC and a 14 percent rating from Planned Parenthood.

In fact, it was the prospect of Upton's heading the committee that led pro-lifers to demand Pitts be appointed as chairman of the subcommittee. [Politico reported on November 18](#) that NRLC sent a letter to members of the House Republican Steering Committee stating:

Because Mr. Upton's record demonstrates a disagreement with pro-life policies on multiple critical issues that fall within the jurisdiction of the Energy and Commerce Committee, we urge you to withhold support for his ascension to the chairmanship, unless and until there is assurance that the Health Subcommittee will be chaired by Mr. Pitts, and unless all of the Republican vacancies on the committee will be filled by members who are firmly committed to pro-life positions.

The letter apparently worked; Pitts will now be chairman of the Health Subcommittee. And with any luck, future generations of Americans will include some of those who might otherwise have been snuffed out in the womb at the expense of pro-life taxpayers' pocketbooks and consciences.

Photo: On October 20, Rep. Pitts and a member of his Youth Advisory Council, Nick Rongione, dropped off donations at the Mision Santa Maria food bank in Avondale, Pa.: Rep. Pitts' website



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