U.S. House Moves to Cut Tax Breaks for Abortion

The measure would prevent individuals from deducting the cost of an abortion from their taxable income, using tax credits to pay for health plans that cover abortions, or even spending funds in tax-free health savings accounts to pay for the procedure.

Representative Dave Camp (R-Mich.), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said that the bill is necessary "because the Democrats' health care law included a massive expansion of the IRS' authority and concocted a host of ways to funnel taxpayer funds for various costs and procedures, including abortions."

Opponents of the bill argued that it would make it difficult for women to pay for health insurance that included abortion coverage. "Worse, they say, it could put the IRS in the awkward position of determining whether women who get abortions were sexually assaulted, so the agency can decide whether the procedure is tax-deductible," reported the Associated Press.

Said Representative Richard Neal (D-Mass.), ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee and a vocal opponent of the measure, "We will intrude into your life in the most difficult of circumstances and send in IRS agents, the ultimate bean-counters, to determine whether your medical records, your criminal records, are sufficient."

But Representative Pat Tiberi (R-Ohio) insisted that all the bill does "is codify longstanding policy that federal dollars should not be used for abortion," and Representative Kevin Brady (R-Texas) emphasized that the measure would ensure that "the destruction of an innocent human life is not something that is subsidized by this government."

Bloomberg News reported that even if the bill passes, "employers could still deduct the costs of health insurance that covers abortion, and employees could receive such coverage without its value counting as taxable income." Additionally, Bloomberg noted that "limits in the measure don't apply to abortions that save the mother's life or to abortions that terminate pregnancies caused by rape or incest." And Thomas Barthold, chief of staff of the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, said it was an "open question" as where the bill would come down on the "morning after" abortion pill.

Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council applauded the measure, saying that it would "ensure that not only will abortion funding be removed from Obamacare and the District of Columbia, but that the tax credits under Obamacare and tax incentives in current law will no longer create a government incentive to pay for abortions."

Perkins noted that, along with the key bill by Smith and Lipinski, H.R. 1232 "will ensure that taxpayers are not spending the estimated $72 billion in the next nine years to pay for the abortion coverage of others." He pointed out that people who want it "can still purchase health insurance with abortion and pay for abortion, just not with direct tax incentives. The IRS does not allow cosmetic surgery to be deducted as a tax preferred medical expense, and it should no longer do so for abortion."