



FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE

ACTION ALERT

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR A HUMAN LIFE AMENDMENT, INC.
1500 Massachusetts Avenue, NW • Suite 24 • Washington, DC 20005

202.393.0703
FAX: 202.347.1383
NCHLA.ORG

Urge Representatives to Support IHS Hyde Amendment Vote

Congress is considering legislation to reauthorize the Indian Health Service (IHS) for 10 years. The IHS was last reauthorized in 1992. On February 26, 2008, the Senate passed its bill, S. 1200, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act Amendments. The House bill, H.R. 1328, may be brought to the floor shortly.

Prior to final passage the Senate voted, 52-yes, 42-no, to approve an amendment by Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) to incorporate the policy of the Hyde Amendment into the bill (no federal funds for abortion, with exceptions for danger to the life of the mother or cases of rape or incest). Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) is prepared to offer the same amendment in the House.

The Vitter/Pitts amendment corrects an awkward and anomalous procedure in current law. The IHS authorizing legislation specifies by reference that the abortion funding policy governing the Department of Health and Human Services at any given time applies to the IHS during that time (25 USC 1676). The Vitter/Pitts amendment improves this situation by placing the Hyde Amendment abortion funding policy directly in the appropriate authorizing law, thus removing the policy from the uncertainty and possible alterations in an unrelated and changeable appropriations bill. Congress's reauthorization of the IHS presents the opportunity to make this correction in the law.

Abortion advocates in Congress are opposed to any limits on federal funding of abortions. In an attempt to block the Vitter Amendment they delayed passage of S. 1200 in the Senate. They are now seeking to block a vote on the Pitts amendment in the House. *House Members should be urged to support the Pitts amendment, and to oppose any attempt to bring H.R. 1328 to the House floor under a procedure (such as a motion to suspend the rules) that would prevent the House from voting on the Pitts amendment.* The application of the Hyde Amendment to the IHS does not present a new policy; and now, as in the past, it is consistent with the deepest values honored by Indian cultures. For background on the Hyde Amendment, see Fact Sheet at: www.nchla.org/factdisplay.asp?ID=41.

In a June 10, 2008, letter to the House, Cardinal Justin Rigali, Chairman of the Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, concluded, "Please join me in urging that the Pitts amendment be allowed an opportunity for debate and vote, and in supporting the amendment itself, to reaffirm a basic and longstanding congressional policy of not requiring U.S. taxpayers to fund elective abortions." For full text of letter, see: nchla.org/datasource/idocuments/indianhouse.pdf.

ACTION: Please send FAX letters or e-mails to your Representative or place phone calls to his or her office. Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121, or call a Member's local office. FAX numbers (in many cases), e-mail addresses, and local office phone numbers can be found on Member's web pages. See: www.house.gov.

MESSAGE: "Please support the Pitts amendment, and oppose any attempt to bring H.R. 1328 to the House floor without allowing a vote on this amendment. The application of the Hyde funding policy to the Indian Health Service reaffirms a basic and longstanding policy of not requiring taxpayers to fund elective abortions."

WHEN: Please act today! H.R. 1328 may be brought to the House floor shortly. Thanks!

Updated 6/10/08