

Matthew Hauck, Warsaw—Physical Therapist

Question: Does this legislation remove barriers to receiving services or add more barriers to services such as physical and occupational therapy; and will this bill have a Medicare cap like current Medicare regulations? Thank you for your time.

Answer: For several years now, Congress has been extending the therapy cap exceptions that are set to expire on January 1, 2010.

Yes, HR 3962, the Affordable Health Choices for America Act would extend the therapy caps exceptions process for an additional 2 years.

While I could not support HR 3962, I am a cosponsor of HR 43, the Medicare Access to Rehabilitation Services Act that would ensure patients have access to medically necessary physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech pathology services. The bill would repeal the annual cap on therapy services.

I voted for the previous extension that was included in the 2008 Medicare Bill

Jim Blum, Fort Wayne

QUESTION: What is the likelihood that the Senate will pass a health care bill that includes a public option?

ANSWER: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has his work cut out for him because the public option remains a dividing line among Democrats. Even if Reid is able to convince moderates, including Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.) and Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.), to vote with Democrats on a procedural motion to begin debate, there will still be a big battle over what the public option should look like.

Jim Blum, Fort Wayne

QUESTION: What is the likelihood that the Senate will pass a health care bill funds abortions?

POSSIBLE ABORTION ANSWER: In the Senate, just three Democrats—Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Bob Casey of Pennsylvania and Kent Conrad of North Dakota—are on record so far supporting an abortion funding ban.

Joined by most of the Republican conference, but offset by pro-abortion Republicans Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins of Maine, the combined bipartisan pro-life forces do not appear to have the strength to get to enough votes for a Stupak-type amendment. The Senate process makes it so 60 votes are needed for a Stupak-type amendment banning abortion funding, rather than the normal majority.

That virtually guarantees massive abortion funding will be in the Senate version of the health care bill unless Reid introduces the bill with the Stupak amendment attached (and if it survives an expected amendment from abortion advocates to remove it).

If the Senate includes this provision, it would still have to pass the House as part of the conference report.

In an item entitled: *In Congress, a Predicament for Abortion Supporters* – the NYT reported over the weekend, that Representatives “Diana DeGette of Colorado and Louise M. Slaughter of New York, both Democrats and co-chairwomen of the Congressional Pro-Choice Caucus, said more than 40 members had attached their names to a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, warning that they would not vote for a final bill if it “restricts women’s right to choose any further than current law.”

But the two have not released the names of those 40 members, and aides said the commitments were oral, not written. Ms. Slaughter, for one, declined in an interview to say whether she would vote for a final bill with an anti-abortion measure.”