



STATE SENATOR

RICH ZIPPERER

Testimony of Senator Rich Zipperer
May 25, 2011
Senate Bill 92

Madam Chair and Committee Members:

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you about this simple, but important bill to ensure that Wisconsin's policy of not using taxpayer dollars to subsidize abortion is continued.

As the members of the committee are aware, Wisconsin has in place a ban on utilizing state funds to pay for or subsidize abortions. That policy, however, has been put in jeopardy by the federal health care legislation passed during the previous session of Congress and signed into law by President Obama.

The federal health care law requires states to establish health insurance exchanges, which are essentially subsidized marketplaces for the purchase of health care, and those health insurance exchanges could be required to provide abortion coverage unless states specifically choose not to do so. The federal law is clear that states have the ability to opt-out if they so choose, and a number of states already have done so.

This legislation would simply take advantage of the opt-out provision in the federal law and extend Wisconsin's current prohibition on taxpayer funded abortions to the mandated health insurance exchanges.

Not forcing taxpayers to fund abortions has not only been the law of our state for years, but it is also a position with broad public support. For example, a 2010 Quinnipiac University poll showed 67% of the public opposed allowing abortions to be paid for with public funds under the federal health care bill. A 2009 CNN poll pegged the opposition to taxpayer funded abortions at 61%.

The need for the bill is clear. If the legislature does not act, taxpayers in Wisconsin will be forced to subsidize abortions. If we do choose to act, however, we can prevent federal law from dictating changes in our state and make clear that this legislature will not force taxpayers to fund abortions.