

"HR 3200 - Prayer is Not Medical Care"

Tucked into the health care reform bill passed by Sen. Harkin's Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee is a mandate that insurers reimburse for "religious or spiritual health care" that is classified as a deductible medical care expense by the Internal Revenue Service. See S.1679, Section 3103(a)(1)(D).

The House Energy and Commerce Committee on which Congressman Bruce Braley sits has added a similar measure to the House health care reform bill. See Section 125 of HR3200.

If the federal government forces the insurance industry to pay for prayer, the Christian Science church and other faith healing practitioners will use the federal law as another argument that Christian Science "treatment" or prayer should be a legal substitute for medical care of sick children.

Between 1 and 5 children currently die in the United States, per month, from religiously-motivated medical neglect. If the Congress passes into law these provisions equating prayer with medical care, this number will surely increase.

There will be more laws like West Virginia's religious defense to fatal neglect of a child when parents withhold medical care and instead rely on prayer-treatment "if fees and expenses incurred in connection with such treatment are permitted to be deducted from taxable income as 'medical expenses' pursuant to regulations or rules promulgated by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. (West Virginia Code 61-8D-4a(b)).

Iowa's religious defense to felony child endangerment and manslaughter at Iowa Code 726.6(d) has been justified on similar grounds.

The government should not be forcing anyone to pay for prayer. We urge Congress to remove all provisions in the health care reform bills that require insurers to reimburse for prayer or any other "health care" that is not evidence-based.

We have sent 1,018 letters to Congress so far. Please join us!

Sign this petition online at

<http://www.petition2congress.com/2>