NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Legislative strategy and abortion reduction

Michael Sean Winters | Jul. 6, 2009 NCR Today

I am not one of those inside the Beltway types who thinks all wisdom resides within its eight traffic lanes. But, there are circumstances in which you can see the forest for the trees sometimes better when you are at least familiar with the ways of Washington.

A perfect example of this is the competing bills about the how to reduce the abortion rate, about which the jockeying has become intense in recent weeks. The Ryan-DeLauro bill includes funding for contraception and extensive sex education and will be opposed by the Catholic hierarchy. The Pregnant Women Support Act aims only at the economic, social and health needs of women for whom pregnancy is a complicated blessing. The USCCB has already endorsed the latter bill. The White House has not committed itself. Some groups, such as Third Way, support Ryan-DeLauro. Others, such as Catholics for Life, support the PWSA.

There are issues of principle and conscience involved in the way many people approach these different bills but one of the things that will play itself out is known as a legislative strategy. Some members of Congress might want to support PWSA first, but if it fails, or if Ryan-DeLauro is attached as an amendment, they would support that also. Others want to lead with Ryan-DeLauro and keep PWSA as a fall back in case that fails. It is often the case that, as a bill nears approval, the legislative strategy has more to do with the final outcome than the principles with which people began the debate.

You can be cynical and repeat the old adage that making laws is like making sausage only messier. But, the nature of the legislative process is to promote compromise. You rarely get everything you want. If Ryan-DeLauro ends up as the majority bill, destined for a vote before the full Congress, I suspect many people who prefer PWSA will support it and we should not necessarily level the charge of caving. Compromise is not always a bad word and on the urgent matter of reducing the abortion rate, made more urgent by the economic downturn and consequent rise in the abortion rate, Catholics can in good conscience support a bill that is not their first preference but is still preferable to doing nothing.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/09/2013 - 23:27*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/legislative-strategy-and-abortion-reduction