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Really? Breast-feeding as political debate?

Renée Schafer Horton | Feb. 21, 2011 NCR Today

Perhaps you heard that Rep. Michelle Bachmann (R-Minn.) criticized First Lady Michelle Obama after Obama said she tax code supported changes [1] that put breast pumps in the category of medical devices.

The change [2] allows mothers to either use pre-tax dollars in medical flexible-spending accounts to buy breast pumps or itemize their taxes and deduct the cost of the devices should their total out-of-pocket medical expenses be more than 7.5 percent of their annual income.

Bachmann claimed the tax code change amounted to creating a ?nanny state.? She said the issue wasn?t breastfeeding per se, but ?Washington?s use of the tax code to tell people how to run their lives.?

As someone who used a breast pump frequently to provide food for my firstborn while I was at work, I can unequivocally say two things about this controversy.

First, it is medical fact that breast milk is better for babies than formula, so we should do all we can to make it easy for women to breastfeed their infants in the first six months of life -- and pumping milk ain?t all that easy.

As the American Academy of Pediatrics states [3], ?Human milk is species-specific, and all substitute feeding preparations differ markedly from it, making human milk uniquely superior for infant feeding [4].?

So, unless Mom is completely malnourished, an alcoholic or crack addict, she should be offering her milk to Junior and not infant formula

Second, if a tax code ?incentive? to buy breast pumps is Washington telling people how to run their lives, then is the tax code regulation about deducting mortgage interest [5] the same thing? What about deductions for conventions held in Bermuda [6]? Or moving expenses for our pets [7]? Are we all being told we must own a home, attend a convention in a tropical island and become the crazy cat lady when we want to move cross-country?

I don?t think so. And neither is labeling breast pumps medical devices the government?s attempt to tell us how to raise our kids. Instead, it is the government?s attempt to support women who do what is best for their children, something one would think Bachmann would support.

After all, she is part of the party that claims to be ?pro-life,? so it seems she should be flying her breast feeding freak flag in the front of the parade supporting good health for the babies brought into this world.

Then again, that would require her to be *truly* pro-life -- fighting the death penalty and questioning war and supporting WIC programs [8] in addition to protesting abortion -- and that might be asking too much.

Source URL (retrieved on *05/02/2016 - 14:49*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/really-breast-feeding-political-debate

Links:

[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/18/AR2011021805522.html
[2] http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/a-11-14.pdf
[3] http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/breastfeeding.cfm
[4] http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;115/2/496#SEC2
[5] http://www.irs.gov/publications/p936/ar02.html#en_US_2010_publink1000230003
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