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## **Women's Health Care In Jeopardy, As Debate Moves to Senate** *NOW-NYC and Advocates Rally for Health Care That Includes Abortion Coverage*

Friday, December 04, 2009 – New York, NY – The National Organization for Women–New York City joined forces with NOW chapters and members from across the city and state to call for fair and comprehensive health-care reform that includes the option of abortion coverage for women. Assembling in front of Senator Chuck Schumer's office, Sonia Ossorio, president of the National Organization for Women, New York City, calls on every pro-choice woman in New York City to join NOW-NYC in fighting the latest assault on women's reproductive health care.

"This is a pivotal moment for the nation's women. We are asking women and the pro-choice majority to speak up and speak out about the need for insurance coverage that covers abortion, a legal and vital component of women's health care," says NOW-NYC President Sonia Ossorio.

In an up-or-down vote last month, the House passed a health care reform bill that included a last minute amendment, known as the Stupak-Pitts amendment, which bars any federally subsidized insurance plan from covering abortions. The original health care bill already included a ban on federal funding for abortion, in compliance with the discriminatory Hyde Amendment that has been in effect since 1976. The bill stipulated that only women's personal funds could pay for abortion care. Abortion is the most common surgical procedure performed on women in the United States.

"This could be a huge setback for women and for health care in the United States," Ossorio said. "We are calling on our Senate leaders to stand up for women and for the pro-choice community that elected them. Women's health, and our access to reproductive health care, is not a political bargaining chip. Women's lives are at stake. We will not allow a health-care reform bill that ignores women's real lives by decimating our access to reproductive health care."

The Stupak-Pitts amendment would force women who want comprehensive reproductive health care coverage to purchase a separate, single-service rider for abortion.

"Forcing women to buy a supplemental insurance rider to cover abortion is absurd and unrealistic, especially since women don't know if they'll ever need an abortion," Ossorio said. "Shutting out insurance companies who cover abortion from health-care reform brings into question whether insurance for abortion coverage would even be viable. This is a radical departure from our current system where more than 85 percent of private insurance plans cover abortion services."

"This vote is a wakeup call," Ossorio said. "Women are furious. Women will not stand for anti-choice lawmakers who think they can use health reform to attack women's health, women's privacy and women's rights. This fight is not over, it's just getting started."

The National Organization for Women is the nation's largest organization working to advance women's rights and improve women's lives. The New York City Chapter of NOW, founded in 1966, is one of the largest chapters in the country with over 5,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to protect women's reproductive choices, end violence against women and eliminate sex discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and the justice system in New York.

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