

BART STUPAK'S C-STREET SEPSIS

As you read Bart Stupak boasting of taking reproductive choice away from women, remember that he's not just an otherwise good Democrat (he's not, in fact, a Blue Dog) who consistently lets the agenda of the Catholic Church override the well-being of his constituents, he's also one of C-Street's top Democratic members. This man, crowing over his legislative success is speaking as a representative of a group that preaches moral purity for others, but excuses itself from such moral guidelines with a back-slapping prayer lunch with the buddies. And then turns around and uses that moralizing to accrue political power.



HuffPost asked Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Mich.), the lead Blue Dog negotiator, why he succeeded and the progressives failed.

"Because I didn't threat[en]. These are the facts," he said.

But you did threaten, a reporter pointed out.

No, Stupak said, it wasn't a threat. It was a promise. "No, they know I'll vote against the rule," he said.

Stupak said the Blue Dogs have gradually been sending a message to leadership and that much of it goes back to a previous vote involving an appropriations bill that Blue Dogs wanted to include pro-life language.

In July, the House considered a Financial Services Appropriations bill that would allow publicly-funded abortions in the District of Columbia. Stupak and allies were not allowed an amendment, so they sought to "take down

the rule” – in other words, round up enough votes to deny he bill a chance to get voted on on the floor. When time expired, the pro-lifers had prevailed. But Pelosi held the vote open for extra time and persuaded four members to switch their votes.

They didn’t win in the end, Stupak said, but they accomplished their goal.

“We wanted to send a message,” he said. “We went back and I said, ‘See, I can take down your rule.’”

He has held his fire since then, saving his strength for the health care bill.

“Now, I have not threatened that every time that we went to Rules Committee and we didn’t always get our pro-life amendments, I did not try to take down any rules. You have to pick your fights at the right time. You can’t be crying wolf all the time because you lose your wolfiness. You lose your credibility,” he said. “So I’m not going to lose my credibility. So you use it at certain times when it’s appropriate.”

Viewed through the lens of Stupak’s C Street membership, this victory lap (and all the others he has been doing) comes off as what it is: a naked grab for power through hypocritical moralizing.

Too bad that formula works so well for so many in Washington.