

MAYBE WE CAN HAVE PRAYER TREATMENTS INSTEAD OF REPRODUCTIVE CARE?

There are many reasons I'd love to be a fly on the wall in the conference on health care reform.

But chief among those is to see how (whether) they're going to justify paying for "health care" for the Christian Scientists while denying reproductive care for millions of women.

Backed by some of the most powerful members of the Senate, a little-noticed provision in the healthcare overhaul bill would require insurers to consider covering Christian Science prayer treatments as medical expenses.

The provision was inserted by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah) with the support of Democratic Sens. John F. Kerry and the late Edward M. Kennedy, both of Massachusetts, home to the headquarters of the Church of Christ, Scientist.

The measure would put Christian Science prayer treatments – which substitute for or supplement medical treatments – on the same footing as clinical medicine. While not mentioning the church by name, it would prohibit discrimination against "religious and spiritual healthcare."

Granted, both the Stupak Amendment and payment for Christian Scientist prayer may be removed in conference.

But I'd really like to see how Orrin Hatch, say, tried to explain skewing healthcare in this country only to meet the demands of religion, no matter how wacky, even while denying the care choices of millions of religious and non-

religious women. And, frankly, I'd love to see what the courts think about it. Because once you're making laws to protect the Christian Scientists all the while crafting your bill to meet the demands of the Catholic Bishops, you've got a very interesting Church/State separation question on hand.

Update: Church of Christ, Scientist v. scientology correction per joejoejoe.