

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Neera Tanden [redacted]
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To: H
Subject: From Gibbs' briefing

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Sorry to bother you, but I don't know really who to send something like this to. While the women groups are somewhat livid about the Stupak amendment that passed pretty easily, the abortion deal really was the cost of moving the bill out of the House, in Pelosi's judgment. But given the angle reporters are pursuing (and the groups are probably pushing), you may hear more about this so I thought I'd sent it along.

Today's WH Briefing - midway through after a few q's on abortion already:

Q Okay. And back on the abortion question. Candidate Obama campaigned as a pro-choice Democrat. This was a big debate between he and Hillary Clinton, who was more pro-choice.

MR. GIBBS: I don't completely remember that debate, but go ahead.

Q But anyway, he was a pro-choice Democrat and now he's -- the House has passed some of the strictest legislation restricting abortion that we've seen in a very long time. I mean, can Barack Obama, who campaigned as a pro-choice Democrat, sign legislation with this language?

MR. GIBBS: Well, Jonathan, we'll -- ask me that right before Christmas and the end of the New Year.

(And a few minutes later:)

Q To revisit Iowa briefly and the pro-choice debate that went on there, there were those in the Hillary Clinton camp who said because then-state senator Obama voted "present" on some votes, he was insufficiently pro-choice, and that was sort of fought out a little bit --

MR. GIBBS: Oh, that's what you're talking about. I mean, I think that was --

Q I'm just saying it came up.

MR. GIBBS: I think that was handled by people that the President had worked with, representing those groups, which largely dismissed that argument.

Q Which leads me to the question now -- some of those groups -- NARAL and Planned Parenthood -- have condemned the language in the House bill and want it repealed. Does the White House agree or disagree with NARAL and Planned Parenthood's interpretation of the bill currently?

MR. GIBBS: I'm not going to get deeply into this, except to say that we will work on this and continue to seek consensus and common ground.

Q In pursuit of what -- just passing the bill?

MR. GIBBS: Health care reform.

Q Okay. But not resolving abortion to the satisfaction of NARAL or Planned Parenthood?

MR. GIBBS: I think this obviously is something that will have to be addressed in order to get to that point.