

I voted No on H.R. 358, the Protect Life Act. The bill would primarily prevent federal funding or subsidization of abortion through the new health care law. It is clear the majority of taxpayers do not want tax dollars spent on abortion, so I support this section of H.R. 358. I always support the “Hyde Amendment,” which prevents appropriated federal funds from being spent on abortion.

However, the legislation would also expand a “refusal” clause in current law, potentially affecting emergency room services under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, the federal law governing hospitals’ duty to stabilize patients in an emergency situation. Undoing a protection that women get emergency care if they need it, jeopardizing their health, is a step too far. We can never imagine what we would do in a life-or-death situation, but potentially relieving a hospital of its duty in such a circumstance is not appropriate. This is a different matter entirely than simply not spending federal funds on abortion.

Throughout my adult life, I have been consistent supporter of women’s rights and healthcare organizations Upstate that aid women, especially those most vulnerable in our community. While I personally oppose abortion and oppose it being funded by federal tax dollars, individuals should be free to make that very difficult and personal decision without undue government involvement.

My objection to this bill was the expansion of the refusal clause – and though I support parts of this bill – I am unable to support opening a loophole which could allow a woman to be denied life-saving treatment at a hospital.