

SPRINGFIELD NEWS-SUN

OUR VIEW ABORTION

Finding common ground, at last, in cultural wars

One hopeful feature of the coming Barack Obama presidency is his apparent passion for moving the nation beyond its weary cultural debates over such issues as abortion and gay marriage. The president-elect has talked about finding new ways to look at old issues since his primetime debut at the 2004 Democratic convention.

Common ground, of course, doesn't magically appear, as if found on a map. Obama must make hard decisions, including selecting the right legislation to support as his term begins.

Interestingly, a pro-life Democrat and a pro-choice Democrat offer a way forward. Reps. Tim Ryan of Ohio and Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut, after watching past abortion debates end fruitlessly, have a bill that those opposed to abortion rights and those in favor of them can support. It's focused on reducing the number of abortions.

One part of this odd couple's proposal would give women incentives to carry their fetuses to term: It would remove pregnancy from the list of pre-existing conditions insurers won't cover, provide nursing visits to qualifying new mothers and expand the tax credit families can

claim when adopting children.

The second emphasis is equally significant. It would try to curtail the number of unwanted pregnancies through grants to local agencies that successfully prevent teen pregnancies. It also would expand contraceptive education and allow Medicaid to finance more family-planning services.

What we like is that this bill should push both sides out of their comfort zones. Pro-choice advocates would end up championing bringing more children to term. Pro-life backers would support contraceptives and other ways to prevent pregnancies. That's breaking new ground for both.

An impressive list of supporters is lining up behind this bill, from such pro-life progressives as the Rev. Jim Wallis of Sojourners (<http://www.sojo.net>) to pro-choice supporters like Obama's new chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel.

We hope Emanuel persuades his boss to make this legislation an early priority. If opponents can agree on the nettlesome subject of abortion, who knows? Maybe opponents on other cultural issues can find their own common ground.

— McClatchy News Service