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Sebelius Nomination Moves Forward

A divided Senate Finance Committee has OK'd Kathleen Sebelius' nomination for HHS secretary.

Some GOP senators expressed concerns about Sebelius' inaccurate response to the Finance Committee about how much campaign money she got from Dr. George Tiller, a Wichita abortion doctor who is under investigation by Kansas' medical board over late-term procedures he performed.

Sebelius told the committee in written responses after her confirmation hearing this month that Tiller had given her \$12,450 between 1994 and 2001.

She was forced to revise that response after an Associated Press review showed that Tiller and his abortion clinic donated an additional \$23,000 between 2000 and 2002 to a political action committee Sebelius established to raise money for fellow Democrats. Sebelius apologized and called it an oversight.

Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, the top Republican on the committee, said in an interview last week that he found the revelations troubling. "I don't think we'll ever get a pro-life person appointed to that position with this president, but we want to make sure we don't get somebody that has got radical views on abortion," he said.

Another committee Republican, Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, said Monday that Sebelius initially "seemed to be a qualified candidate for the job."

"However, after learning about her inexplicable omission of donations from the late-term abortion doctor George Tiller, I have to reevaluate my support for her nomination," Hatch said in a statement. "I regard human life to be sacred, and it troubles me to have someone with an apparent cavalier attitude toward life — as well as a lack of candor on this important issue — head our nation's health services."

The White House stuck by Sebelius.

"We regret that there was an oversight in the initial answer that was provided to the committee," said White House spokeswoman Kate Bedingfield. "This inadvertent oversight was corrected quickly. Gov. Sebelius has enjoyed bipartisan support throughout the nomination process."

Sebelius, 60, a popular two-term Democratic governor in a Republican-leaning state, was Obama's second choice to lead the Health and Human Services Department. His first choice, former Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, withdrew from consideration in February after correcting his tax returns to pay more than \$100,000 in back taxes.

Sebelius had her own tax problems. Prior to her confirmation hearing she corrected three years' worth of tax returns and paid more than \$7,000 in back taxes to fix improper deductions.

The Finance Committee was taking up Sebelius' nomination at the first of several scheduled "round

table" discussions on how to reshape the nation's health care system. Tuesday's session is to focus on how to improve the way health care is delivered to patients.

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