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December 18, 2009: Outrageous Breach of Wall of Separation as Rabbis Urge Lieberman to Support Health Care Reform

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12/18/2009—I'm only kidding with that title. But why am I not going to see secularists upset over the involvement by these religious leaders in the healthcare fight? What happened is that 29 Connecticut rabbis wrote to Senator Joe Lieberman to urge him to reconsider his position on health care reform. Rabbi Carl Astor was quoted in the story in The Day that "taking care of those in need is...one of the basic tenets...of the Jewish religion" and that Lieberman is "an observant Jew." Now, how is this any different from the role of the Catholic Bishops in trying to shape the health care bill in the House? It isn't. But then we heard about how religious leaders were imposing their religion on the rest of us in violation of the separation of church and state. We won't hear a word about that in this instance. The difference of course is that separation complaints come from the left and the left, including me, wants Lieberman to support the bill in the Senate. We don't care where the pressure comes from as long as it works. Religion is one of the background commitments that motivate political behavior. It is not illegitimate in a democracy. The democratic requirement is simply that political leaders are upfront about their commitments so the voters know ahead of time.