



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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BULLETIN INSERT

Conscience Rights, Religious Liberty Violated by Sweeping HHS Contraceptive Mandate

On January 20, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reaffirmed a rule that virtually all private health care plans must cover sterilization, abortifacients, and contraception. The exemption provided for "religious employers" is so narrow that it fails to cover the vast majority of faith-based organizations, including Catholic hospitals, universities, and service organizations that help millions every year. Ironically, not even Jesus & his disciples would have qualified, because of their commitment to serve others.

On February 10, President Obama stated that he would retain HHS's nationwide mandate of insurance coverage of sterilization and contraception, including some abortifacients, and then he announced some changes in how that mandate will be administered, which is still unclear in its details.

This does not change the urgent need for legislation to correct the mandate's threats to religious liberty and conscience rights. The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act has been introduced in Congress (H.R. 1179, S. 1467) to ensure that those who participate in the health care system "retain the right to provide, purchase, or enroll in health coverage that is consistent with their religious beliefs and moral convictions." It is more important than ever that Members of Congress be urged to co-sponsor this measure – or thanked if they are already co-sponsoring the bill. For the list of current co-sponsors, please check **H.R. 1179** and **S. 1467** at: thomas.loc.gov.

ACTION: Contact your U.S. Representative by e-mail, phone, or FAX letter:

- Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202-224-3121, or call your Members' local offices.
- Send your email to congress through www.usccb.org/conscience.
- Additional contact info can be found on Members' web sites at: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

MESSAGE: "Please co-sponsor the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179, S. 1467) and help enact it into law. The Obama administration's decision to mandate coverage of sterilization and contraceptives, including drugs that can cause an abortion, makes passage of this measure especially urgent. Please ensure that the rights of conscience of all participants in our nation's health care system are respected."

WHEN: Now is the time to build co-sponsors and support. Please act today! Thanks!

For more background information, go to www.usccb.org/conscience.