

LEGISLATIVE HOT LINE



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Sponsored by the Five Catholic Commissions and Catholic Campaign for Human Development of the Secretariat for Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

July 28, 2009

“Health Care is not just another issue for the Church or for a healthy society. It is a fundamental issue of human life and dignity. Health care is a critical component of the Catholic Church’s ministry. “
Bishop Murphy, Chair Committee Domestic Justice & Human Development USCCB

YOUR ACTION IS NEEDED TODAY! **CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVE REGARDING HEALTH CARE REFORM BILL!**

The House may vote on a health care bill very soon! The situation is very fluid so it is difficult to know exactly when a House vote may happen. But House leadership seems committed to voting on a health care reform bill before the House adjourns for the August recess on Friday, July 31 (or Friday, August 7, if they decide to stay an extra week.)

ACTION:

It is important that people call or email or send fax letters to their Representative TODAY and tell them to pass a health care reform bill that respects the life and dignity of all people from the moment of conception until natural death.

~~Call Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 Go to www.house.gov or www.senate.gov
for Members full contact information, including local District offices.

It is particularly important that members of the House of Representatives are contacted immediately!
(See below for full message)

BACKGROUND:

HOUSE: On July 17, the Education and Labor and Ways and Means Committees favorably reported the **America’s Affordable Health Choices Act (H.R. 3200)**. During markup these committees rejected amendments to exclude mandated coverage for abortion. The Committee on Energy and Commerce, also working on the America’s Affordable Health Choices Act, interrupted its markup two weeks ago and has not yet resumed while House leadership and the committee chairman negotiate significant provisions of the bill, including abortion coverage and conscience protections, with conservative and pro-life Democrats. The committee may resume the markup this week. If so, amendments protecting conscience rights and excluding coverage for abortion will be offered.

House leadership has also said that they expect to bring the health care bill to the full House before the House recesses for the August break. The leadership has threatened to bring the bill to the floor regardless of action or inaction by the Energy and Commerce Committee. ***It is also widely expected that amendments will be offered on the floor protecting conscience rights and excluding coverage for abortion.***

SENATE: On July 15, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee voted out its bill, the **Affordable Health Choices Act (not yet numbered)** During markup the committee rejected amendments to exclude federal funding or mandated coverage for abortion and to maintain current state laws limiting and regulating abortion. The Senate Finance Committee continues to work on a bill that it hopes will be able to secure bipartisan support. It does not seem likely that an agreement will be reached before the Senate recesses for the August break.

On July 17, Bishop William Murphy, Chairman of the Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, sent a letter to Congress saying, “*The USCCB looks forward to working with you to reform health care*

successfully in a manner that offers accessible, affordable and quality health care that protects and respects the life and dignity of all people from conception until natural death.” Abortion must not be included as part of a national health care benefit. “No health care reform plan should compel us or others to pay for the destruction of human life, whether through government funding or mandatory coverage of abortion.” Bishop Murphy argued that any legislation should reflect longstanding policies “on abortion funding, mandates and conscience protections because they represent sound morality, wise policy and political reality.”

The full text of Bishop Murphy’s letter can be found online at:

www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/2009-07-17-murphy-letter-congress.pdf

ACTION MESSAGE:

1. **Support long overdue health care reform** that protects the life, dignity and health of all, as an important national priority and moral imperative.
2. **Support essential efforts to keep in place** longstanding and widely supported measures that:
 - ~~ **Prohibit federal funds to be used for abortion** (with the exceptions in current law for cases of rape, incest and to protect the life of the mother);
 - ~~**Do not mandate abortion coverage**; and,
 - ~~**Protect conscience rights** of providers to not participate in abortion.

Urge members of the House to take whatever steps necessary in Committee or on the House Floor to oppose abortion funding, mandates or weakening of conscience protections.

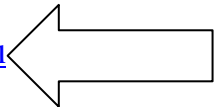
Imposing abortion coverage or funding is bad morality, bad policy and bad politics. Efforts to expand abortion will undermine attempts to pass needed reform.

3. **Support effective measures to safeguard the health** of immigrants, their children and all of society by expanding eligibility for public programs, such as Medicaid, to all low-income families and vulnerable people and offering adequate subsidies for cost-sharing of insurance premiums and out of pocket expenses.

SEE ALSO PREVIOUS LEGISLATIVE HOT LINE (JULY 20, 2009) FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING ADVOCACY ON HEALTH CARE REFORM!

EVENTS AND RESOURCES

Resources on Health Care Reform can be found <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/health1.shtml>
www.catholic-action.org



Catholic Social Teaching: “Reform of the nation’s health care system needs to be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, and meet the needs of the poor and uninsured, especially born and unborn children, pregnant women, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations.”

For more information on the above, please call the Diocesan Social Action Office at 216-939-3851 or 888-620-5280. You can also visit our web page at www.catholic-action.org for more information. Thank you.