

LEGISLATIVE HOT LINE



1-800-869-6525 Ext 6690

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

July 20, 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

URGENT ACTION NEEDED ON HEALTH CARE REFORM!

BACKGROUND: Members of Congress are debating health care legislation in several committees this week. While there are many details in the health reform bill(s) that still need to be developed, **we must maintain momentum for health care reform efforts with calls and emails** supporting health care reform. The groups that do not support health reform have been blanketing their members of Congress with opposition. **YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU that you support health care reform, and that the system needs to be reformed now, preserving freedom of conscience for providers, health care workers and patients and rejecting any mandate for abortion coverage or access to abortion .**

ACTION: CALL or E MAIL your Senators and Representatives. Express your support for Congress to enact health care reform now which (1) recognizes access to health care as a basic human right, (2) includes the principles as outlined below, (3) preserves freedom of conscience for providers, health care workers and patients and (4) rejects any mandate for abortion coverage or access to abortion.

~~Call Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 or go to www.house.gov www.senate.gov

~~To send an e-mail message to your Representatives, click on "[Take Action](#)" and enter your zip code

[See attached for most recent analysis regarding the legal status quo on abortion received from the Secretariat of Pro Life Activities office - USCCB.](#)

As a reminder to help in your calls and messages, Catholic Charities USA has adopted the Catholic Health Association's *Vision for U.S. Health Care* which lays out principles for reforming the health care system. We call for health care reform that is:

- Available and accessible to everyone, paying special attention to the poor and vulnerable;
- Health and prevention oriented, with the goal of enhancing the health status of communities;
- Sufficiently and fairly financed;
- Transparent and consensus-driven, in allocation of resources, and organized for cost-effective care and administration;
- Patient centered, and designed to address and protect health needs at all stages of life, from conception to natural death; and
- Safe, effective and designed to deliver the greatest possible quality.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: Health care is not just another issue for the Church or for a healthy society. In our Catholic tradition, health care is a basic human right and a critical component of the Catholic Church's ministry. Access to health care should not depend on where a person works, how much a family earns, or where a person lives. Instead, every person, created in the image and likeness of God, has a right to life and to those things necessary to sustain life, including affordable, quality health care. This teaching is rooted in (1) the biblical call to

heal the sick and to serve "the least of these," (2) our concern for human life and dignity, and (3) the principle of the common good.

The Church provides health care, purchases health care and picks up the pieces of a failing health care system. The Catholic community encounters and serves the sick and uninsured in our emergency rooms, shelters and on the doorsteps of our parishes. One out of six patients is cared for in Catholic hospitals. We bring both strong convictions and everyday experience to the issue of health care.

CALL OR E MAIL YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES NOW! SEND THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO WRITE OR CALL TODAY!

STATE BUDGET DISAPPOINTMENT. BUDGET CORRECTION BILL POSSIBLE IN FALL.

After much advocacy to urge the Ohio General Assembly and Governor to protect the poor and vulnerable in State Budget deliberations, the final bill was a disappointment. Faced with a \$3B hole, cuts amounting to \$2B were made with a projected \$900M to be raised through the video slots authorized in the bill.

Hunger had their funds restored, while the Disability Assistance cash program was eliminated, along with cuts in TANF, PASSPORT, and a reduction in funding for our parochial schools.

"The \$250 M cut in public assistance has dismantled child protective services and needed jobs and training programs. Denying PASSPORT in-home care and community-based services to older Ohioans will harm many, many families and will result in increased reliance on costly nursing home care," stated Carolyn Jurkowitz, executive director for the Catholic Conference of Ohio. Jurkowitz reported that the Ohio Catholic bishops are on record as opposing slot machines and casino gambling. *"Neither is in the best moral, social or economic interest of the people of Ohio."*

Thanks to all who took time to write, call or e mail their state legislators. It is anticipated that a Budget Correction Bill will be considered in the fall. The Diocesan Social Action Office will continue to be a voice for the poor and vulnerable populations who have been affected by these latest cuts. More to come on this issue as it unfolds.

REQUEST FOR CLEMENCY

Jason Getsy is scheduled for execution on August 18, 2009 for the death of Ann Serafino from Hubbard. The Ohio Parole Board with seven (7) members participating, by a vote of five (5) to two (2) recommended to Governor Strickland that executive clemency be GRANTED in the form of a Commutation to Life without the possibility of parole. The Parole Board noted that

- Four Defendants participated in the offense... Mr Santine, the person who organized the murder plan exerted considerable influence over the co-defendants
- The original jury was limited in their ability to consider Getsy's psychological history and any influence it may have had upon his decision to comply with the direction of Mr. Santine.
- Mr. Getsy has continuously expressed remorse for the victims and their family
- In imposing a death sentence, it is imperative that there be consistency and similar penalties imposed upon similarly situated co-defendants. This was not the case. Each defendant received 20-30 years to life except Getsy -- Death by lethal injection August 18, 2009

Governor Strickland has received the Parole Board's recommendation. He may concur with it, issue an order of executive clemency, and commute Mr. Getsy's sentence from death by lethal injection to life imprisonment without eligibility for parole.

ACTION: CONTACT THE GOVERNOR. Urge him to agree with the majority recommendation of the Parole Board and commute Mr. Getsy's sentence to life imprisonment without eligibility for parole.

Governor Ted Strickland, Riffe Center, 30th Flr, 77 South High St, Columbus OH 43215-6108

General Info Phone: (614) 466-3555

Fax: (614) 466-9354

Online form: <http://www.governor.ohio.gov/Contact/tabid/153/Default.aspx>

OPPOSE ENFORCEMENT-ONLY APPROACHES TO IMMIGRATION REFORM

BACKGROUND -FEDERAL: Last week the U.S. Senate considered amendments to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill. During the debate, the Senate considered and adopted several immigration enforcement amendments which continue the enforcement-only approach to immigration reform. An amendment enhancing the U.S.-Mexico border fence by requiring the completion of at least 700 miles of double fencing along the Southwest border was particularly disturbing. The Senate also adopted an amendment to extend the employment verification program and two other immigration enforcement amendments by voice vote.

Notwithstanding the substance of the above amendments, a vote in favor demonstrates that enforcement-only approaches to immigration reform are still supported by the majority of the Senate.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: All persons have the right to find in their homeland the economic, political and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life by using their God-given gifts. When persons cannot find employment in their homeland to support themselves and their families, they have a right to seek work elsewhere. This right is not absolute; it must be based on reasons that are just. Sovereign nations have the right to protect and control their borders for the sake of the common good of their citizens. But this right is also not absolute. Nations also have an obligation to the universal common good, which extends beyond individual borders.

ACTION: Using the border fence vote as an example, we must communicate to our Senators that enforcement-only legislation is wrongheaded and ineffective and that only comprehensive immigration reform will help repair a badly broken immigration system.

It is important to “Thank “ our Senators Brown and Voinovich for their vote against these enforcement only amendments to the DHS appropriations bill and urge them to work more diligently on a comprehensive reform of our current immigration system.”

EVENTS AND RESOURCES

Resources on Health Care Reform can be found <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/health1.shtml> or 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.*”

Contact your Congressional representatives by FAX letter, e-mail, or phone.
Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: (202) 224-3121; or call Members’ local offices.
Full contact info can be found on Members of Congress’s web sites at: www.senate.gov and www.house.gov

For contact information on your Ohio Legislators, go to:
<http://www.ohiocathconf.org/L/legisbydiocese.htm>
<http://www.legislature.state.oh.us>
.....or call: (800) 282-0253

Call the White House comment line at 202-456-1111 or send an e-mail to
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>

Contact Governor Strickland by calling (614) 466-3555 or send e-mail to
<http://governor.ohio.gov/Assistance/ContacttheGovernor/tabid/150/Default.aspx>

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.



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Making Health Care Reform “Abortion Neutral”: What is the Legal Status Quo on Abortion?

Abortion advocacy groups want to use health care reform to advance their agenda. They want Congress or a federal commission to establish abortion as a “basic” or “essential” health benefit, subsidize it with federal taxpayer funds, and guarantee ready “access” to abortion nationwide. They claim that pro-life advocates also want to use this legislation to advance the pro-life cause, rescinding options on abortion coverage that existed before.

What are the facts? What does federal law say about abortion, abortion coverage and funding, and conscience rights? *If health care reform were “abortion neutral,” simply preserving the status quo, what policies would it have to reflect and/or keep intact?*

Status of Abortion

- The U.S. Supreme Court’s abortion decisions treat abortion as a “right” in the negative sense – that is, government may not prohibit or place an “undue burden” on a woman’s decision whether to have an abortion before viability. However, the Court has upheld a federal ban throughout pregnancy of a particular abortion procedure known as “partial-birth abortion.” Likewise, the Court has held that government may regulate abortion throughout pregnancy and may “encourage childbirth over abortion,” by, among other things, prohibiting use of public funds, personnel and facilities for abortion.

Abortion Coverage and Funding

- Beginning with the Hyde amendment in 1976, Congress has barred federal funding of abortion in all major health programs for over three decades. Generally such funding has been forbidden except when the mother’s life is endangered by a physical illness or condition, or in cases of rape or incest; these cases constitute a tiny fraction, perhaps 1%, of abortions. Beyond these exceptions, federal funds may not be used for abortion *or for any health benefits package that includes abortion*. Such funding is banned by riders to various appropriations bills, adopted year after year for decades. The laws governing military hospitals and the Children’s Health Insurance Program have their own permanent bans on abortion funding.

- The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), often cited as a possible model for health care reform, is unique in helping to pay the premiums for hundreds of different private health plans, so federal employees may choose the plan that best suits their budgets and other needs. *Not one* of the benefits packages offered to federal employees in this program may include abortion beyond the Hyde exceptions.

Conscience Protection

- For decades, Congress has respected the right of health care providers to decline involvement in abortion or abortion referrals, *without exception*. Since 2004 the Weldon amendment, approved annually as part of the Labor/HHS appropriations act, has forbidden any federal agency or program (or state or local government receiving federal funds under the act) to discriminate against individual or institutional health care providers and insurers because they decline to perform, provide, pay for, provide coverage of, or refer for abortion. Programs such as Medicaid and Medicare, which fund the rare “Hyde exception” abortions, respect the conscience rights of providers who decline to provide any abortions at all. Other laws respect conscience rights on sterilization and other procedures to which providers may have a moral or religious objection. For a list of federal conscience laws see www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion/crmay08.pdf.

Provision for State Laws

- Federal law also allows states to establish their own policies on abortion. Most states follow the federal policy against abortion funding; 46 states have laws protecting the conscience rights of individual health care providers on abortion,¹ and 43 also protect conscience rights for institutional providers.²

- Most states significantly regulate abortion. For example, 35 states have informed consent laws, usually accompanied by a waiting period; 43 have passed laws requiring parental involvement when minors seek abortions; 46 regulate abortion providers to protect women’s life and health.³

- Nine states prohibit *private* insurance plans from covering most abortions, unless the purchaser pays a separate premium to include it as an optional rider.⁴ No federal law, and no state, *requires* private health plans to include elective abortions.

Conclusion

Health care reform whose goal is to advance health coverage, not advance an agenda on abortion, will take care to be abortion neutral. It will preserve current policies that bar use of taxpayer funds, respect conscience rights, and generally encourage childbirth over abortion; it will not mandate abortion as part of any “basic” or minimum benefit package.

7/20/09

¹ All states except AL, NH, VT & WV.

² All states except AL, CT, NH, NY, RI, VT & WV.

³ All states except NH, OR, VT & WV.

⁴ IL, MA, MS, NE, ND, PA, RI, SC & VA.