



Pro-Life Activities

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARDINAL DINARDO URGES SUPPORT FOR LAW PREVENTING FEDERAL FUNDING OF ABORTION

**Law would apply Hyde amendment policy to all federal funds
Would protect health care providers from retaliation for not assisting with abortions**

WASHINGTON-Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, chair of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, called on members of the House of Representatives to support the "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act" (H.R. 5939), introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) at the end of July.

He called for support in an August 20 letter. The bill already has 166 co-sponsors including 20 Democratic members. The text of the letter can be found at www.usccb.org/prolife/DiNardo-HR5939.pdf.

"H.R. 5939 will write into permanent law a policy on which there has been strong popular and congressional agreement for over 35 years: The federal government should not use taxpayers' money to support and promote elective abortion," Cardinal DiNardo said. "Even public officials who take a 'pro-choice' stand on abortion, and courts that have insisted on the validity of a constitutional 'right' to abortion, have agreed that the government can validly use its funding power to encourage childbirth over abortion."

He said some people assume this position already is fully reflected in U.S. law, and noted, for example, that "some wrongly argued during the recent debate on health care reform that there was no need for restrictions on abortion funding in the new health

legislation, because this matter had already been settled by the Hyde amendment.”

However, he noted, the Hyde amendment, which precludes money for elective abortions and health plans that provide them, is only a rider to the annual Labor/Health and Human Services appropriations bill. It has been maintained essentially intact by Congress over the last 35 years, but it only governs funds appropriated under that particular act.

Federal funds are prevented now from funding abortion by riders to various other appropriations bills as well as by provisions incorporated into specific authorizing legislation for the Department of Defense, Children’s Health Insurance Program, foreign assistance, and so on. Gaps or loopholes in these protections have also been discovered at various times, requiring Congress to address them individually.

Thus, “while Congress’s policy has been remarkably consistent for decades, implementation of that policy in practice has been piecemeal and sometimes sadly inadequate,” Cardinal DiNardo said.

H.R. 5939 would also codify the Hyde/Weldon amendment that has been part of the section containing the Hyde amendment in annual Labor/HHS appropriations bills since 2004. Hyde/Weldon has ensured that federal agencies and state and local governments that receive federal funds do not discriminate against health care providers because they do not perform or provide abortions.

“It is long overdue for this policy, as well, to be given a more secure legislative status,” Cardinal DiNardo said. “No hospital, doctor or nurse should be forced to stop providing much-needed legitimate health care because they cannot in conscience participate in destroying a developing human life.”

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