

NEWS RELEASE



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NCC campaign against health care bills U.S. Bishops oppose reform legislation

October 30, 2009 (OMAHA, NE) – Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representative will gather in their respective chambers to debate and vote on health care reform legislation that the U.S. Conference of Bishops has called seriously deficient.

The bishops are insisting that genuine health care reform protect the life and dignity of all people from the moment of conception until natural death. The bills five bills – two in the Senate and three in the House – omit longstanding policies against abortion funding or abortion coverage mandates, and none fully protects the rights of conscience in health care.

Debate and voting on the bills are expected to be taken up first by the U.S. Senate. The Nebraska Catholic Conference (NCC) is urging Nebraska Catholics through announcements at Sunday Masses and bulletin inserts to contact U.S. Senators Ben Nelson (1-202-224-6551 / www.bennelson.senate.gov) and Mike Johanns (1-202-224-4224 / www.johanns.senate.gov) and ask them to ensure that the healthcare reform bills are amended to incorporate longstanding policies against abortion funding and in favor of conscience rights.

Similar health care reform opposition efforts have been undertaken nationwide. In an extraordinary call to Catholics to prevent health care reform from being derailed by the abortion lobby, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has sent bulletin inserts to almost 19,000 parishes across the country.

“Health care reform should be about saving lives, not destroying them,” the insert states. It also highlights the Stupak Amendment. Authored by Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI), the amendment addresses essential pro-life concerns on abortion funding and conscience rights. The bishops are calling for a vote on the amendment.

A dramatic ad of a pregnant woman notes that the Hyde Amendment, which passed in 1976, has prevented federal funds from paying for elective abortions, yet healthcare reform bills that are advancing violate this policy. The ad message: “Tell Congress: Remove Abortion Funding and Mandates from Needed Health Care Reform.”

(more)

Bulletin inserts were distributed to dioceses October 29, the day Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) unveiled the House health care reform bill and in expectation that they will be in parishes by early November. Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, president of the USCCB; Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chair of the bishops' Committee on Pro-life Activities; Bishop John Wester of Salt Lake City, chair of the Committee on Migration; and Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, chair of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development urged fellow bishops to promote this campaign in their dioceses.

The Catholic bishops have a long history of support for health care reform based on its teaching that health care is essential for human life and dignity and on its experience providing health care and assisting those without coverage.

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Founded as a diocese in 1885, the Archdiocese of Omaha serves spiritual and human needs in a 23-county area of Northeast Nebraska. Through its 148 parishes and missions, the archdiocese reaches out to more than 221,000 Nebraska Catholics. With two Catholic universities, 58 elementary schools, 18 high schools and a parish-based religious education program within its boundaries, Catholic education enriches the lives of some 44,000 young people. The Archdiocese of Omaha is one of the largest private social service providers in the region. Catholic Charities and the Office of Family Life lead a network that ministers to the broadest and most fundamental needs of our community. Generous support to the Annual Appeal is symbolic of the collective faith that allows the Archdiocese of Omaha to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. www.archomaha.org