



FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE

ACTION ALERT

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Support Respect for Rights of Conscience Act

Last August, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a list of “preventive services for women” to be mandated in almost all private health plans under the new health care law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). The mandated services include sterilization, all FDA-approved birth control (such as the IUD, Depo-Provera, ‘morning-after’ pills, and the abortion-inducing drug Ella), and “education and counseling” to promote these among all “women of reproductive capacity.” HHS’s rule allowed only a very narrow exemption for a “religious employer.” Catholic organizations providing education, health care and charitable services to all in need could not qualify for the exemption.

On February 10, despite a storm of protest, President Obama adopted this policy as a final rule “without change” (Federal Register, 2/15/12, 8725). Religious organizations that cannot qualify for the exemption will have an extra year to comply; but before the end of that period, an additional rule will be issued to make sure that their employees receive the mandated coverage despite the employer’s objection.

In a February 15 letter to the Senate, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, wrote: “In short, we are back to square one -- except that the rule so many hoped would change to accommodate Americans’ right of conscience is no longer subject to change, except by legislation.” See: nchla.org/datasource/idocuments/S1467-2-15-12.pdf.

The need for action is unchanged. Congress must pass, and the President sign, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. See: www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-026.cfm.

The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179, S. 1467) will 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.” Members of Congress should be urged to support this measure and work for its passage. For co-sponsors, please check **H.R. 1179** and **S. 1467** at: thomas.loc.gov.

Please be advised: In the very near future, the Senate is expected to vote on the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act in the form of an amendment to Transportation Authorization Bill (S. 1813). For this purpose Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO), the primary sponsor of S. 1467, has introduced Senate Amendment 1520. The suggested e-mail message to the Senate at the NCHLA Grassroots Action Center specifically urges Senators to vote for Senate Amendment 1520.

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

- Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202-224-3121, or call your Members’ local offices.
- Send an e-mail through NCHLA’s Grassroots Action Center at: nchla.org/actiondisplay.asp?ID=292.
- Additional contact info can be found on Members’ web sites at: www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

MESSAGE: “Please co-sponsor and support the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179, S. 1467). 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 religious liberty and conscience rights of all participants in our nation’s health care system are respected.”

WHEN: Now is the time to build support and urge a positive vote. Please act today! Thanks!

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