



*Archdiocese of Saint Paul
and Minneapolis*

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

MOST REVEREND JOHN C. NIENSTEDT

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Reverend Fathers and Deacons
FROM: The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt
DATED: November 2, 2009
RE: URGENT: Nationwide USCCB Bulletin Insert on Health Care Reform

Dear Fathers and Deacons:

For many years, the U.S. bishops have supported decent health care for all, based on our teaching that health care is essential for human life and dignity and on our community's experience in providing health care and assisting those without coverage. We have always insisted that health care reform must protect life, not threaten it and that it cannot be used as a vehicle to advance abortion. Specifically, we have clearly required that longstanding federal protections that restrict abortion funding and mandates and that protect conscience rights must be reflected in health reform legislation. In addition, we have also focused on efforts to insure that coverage is affordable and that immigrants have better health care as a result of reform. The USCCB principles and priorities are outlined in a series of letters to Congress, fact sheets and other materials on the USCCB health care reform website (www.usccb.org/healthcare).

The debate and decisions on health care reform are reaching decisive moments.

The USCCB is asking for our special help in activating our Catholic people.

I support this request with an appeal that you activate the people of your parish in the following ways:

- Encourage parish-wide distribution of the enclosed "Bulletin Insert," which assists parishioners in sending a message to Congress.
- The Bulletin Insert should be printed or hand-stuffed in every parish bulletin and/or distributed in pews or at church entrances as soon as possible.
- Congressional votes may take place as soon as early November.
- Direct people to the USCCB health care reform website for updates, additional tools and resources (www.usccb.org/healthcare).
- And finally, please encourage the people of your parish to pray that Congress will act to insure that needed health care reform will truly protect the life, dignity and health care of all and that we will raise our voices to protect the unborn and the most vulnerable and to preserve our freedom of conscience.



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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USCCB NATIONWIDE BULLETIN INSERT

Tell Congress: Remove Abortion Funding & Mandates from Needed Health Care Reform

Congress is preparing to debate health care reform legislation on the House and Senate floors. Genuine health care reform should protect the life and dignity of all people from the moment of conception until natural death. The U.S. bishops' conference has concluded that all committee-approved bills are seriously deficient on the issues of abortion and conscience, and do not provide adequate access to health care for immigrants and the poor. The bills will have to change or the bishops have pledged to oppose them.

Our nation is at a crossroads. Policies adopted in health care reform will have an impact for good or ill for years to come. None of the bills retains longstanding current policies against abortion funding or abortion coverage mandates, and none fully protects conscience rights in health care.

As the U.S. bishops' letter of October 8 states:

"No one should be required to pay for or participate in abortion. It is essential that the legislation clearly apply to this new program longstanding and widely supported federal restrictions on abortion funding and mandates, and protections for rights of conscience. No current bill meets this test.... If acceptable language in these areas cannot be found, we will have to oppose the health care bill vigorously."

For the full text of this letter and more information on proposed legislation and the bishops' advocacy for authentic health care reform, visit: www.usccb.org/healthcare.

Congressional leaders are attempting to put together final bills for floor consideration. Please contact your Representative and Senators today and urge them to fix these bills with the pro-life amendments noted below. Otherwise much needed health care reform will have to be opposed. Health care reform should be about saving lives, not destroying them.

ACTION: Contact Members through e-mail, phone calls or FAX letters.

- **To send a pre-written, instant e-mail to Congress go to www.usccb.org/action.**
- Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202-224-3121, or call your Members' local offices.
- Full contact info can be found on Members' web sites at www.house.gov & www.senate.gov.

MESSAGE to SENATE:

"During floor debate on the health care reform bill, please support an amendment to incorporate longstanding policies against abortion funding and in favor of conscience rights. If these serious concerns are not addressed, the final bill should be opposed."

MESSAGE to HOUSE:

"Please support the Stupak Amendment that addresses essential pro-life concerns on abortion funding and conscience rights in the health care reform bill. Help ensure that the Rule for the bill allows a vote on this amendment. If these serious concerns are not addressed, the final bill should be opposed."

WHEN: Both House and Senate are preparing for floor votes now. **Act today! Thank you!**