
November 22, 2009 • Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

Pastor's Column

Rev. Michael Ratajczak
michaelr@stmoside.org
760-758-4100 x100

Cardinal George, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Lauds House Action to Ban Federal Funds for Abortion; Promises Vigilance as Senate Pursues Health Care Reform; Wary About Effect on Poor, Elderly

This is a statement issued on November 9 by Cardinal Francis George on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Over the weekend, the US House of Representatives advanced major legislation to provide adequate and affordable health care to all. The Catholic Bishops of the United States have long advocated that adequate health care be made available to everyone. In an essential step, the House voted overwhelmingly to reaffirm the longstanding and widely supported precedent that no federal funds will be used to pay for elective abortions. In doing so, the Representatives honored President Obama's commitment to the Congress and the nation that health care reform would not become a vehicle for expanding abortion funding or mandates. The Conference will remain vigilant and involved throughout this entire process to assure that these essential provisions are maintained and included in the final legislation. We will work to persuade the Senate to follow the example of the House and include these critical safeguards in their version of health care reform legislation. We also thank the members of the House who took this courageous and principled step to oppose measures that would force Americans to pay for the destruction of unborn children, and the Democratic leadership for allowing the Representatives to vote on this amendment that protects the common good.

In the national discussion on how to provide the best kind of health care, we bishops do not claim or present ourselves as

experts on health care policy. We are not prepared to assess every provision of legislation as complex as this proposal. However, health care legislation, with all its political, technical, and economic aspects, is about human beings and hence has serious moral dimensions. Our focus is the concrete realities of families with children and their access to doctors, the poor and the elderly, those with limited means, and those with few or even no means, such as the mother carrying a child in her womb. Our Catholic commitment to health care picks up the pieces of our failing system in our emergency rooms, clinics, parishes, and communities. This is why we believe our nation's health care system needs reform which protects human life and dignity and serves the poor and vulnerable as a moral imperative and an urgent national priority.

We remain deeply concerned about the debate that now moves to the Senate, especially as it will affect the poor and vulnerable, and those at the beginning and end of life. We will continue to insist that health care reform legislation must protect conscience rights. We support measures to make health care more affordable for low-income people and the uninsured. We remain deeply concerned that immigrants be treated fairly and not lose the health care coverage that they now have. We will continue to raise our voices in public and in prayer; we ask our people to join us in making the moral case for genuine health care reform that protects the life, dignity, consciences and health of all.

Fr. Mike