

## Pastor's Column

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### Health Care Reform Update

*On Thursday, February 25, the much-anticipated bipartisan "summit" on health-care reform between Congressional leaders and President Obama was held.*

*Health-care reform, in the background for awhile, is once again taking center stage.*

*In preparation for the "summit," the following letter emerged from the leadership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid:*

Dear Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid,

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), we strongly urge the congressional leaders from both parties meeting on February 25, 2010 to commit themselves to enacting genuine health care reform that will protect the life, dignity, consciences, and health of all. It is time to set aside partisan divisions and special interest pressures to find ways to enact genuine reform. We encourage the Administration and Congress to work in a bipartisan manner marked by political courage, vision, and leadership.

The Catholic bishops have long supported adequate and affordable health care for all, because health care is a basic human right. As pastors and teachers, we believe genuine health care reform must protect human life and dignity from conception to natural death, not threaten them, especially for the voiceless and vulnerable. We believe health care legislation must respect the consciences of providers, taxpayers, purchasers of insurance, and others, not violate them. We believe universal coverage should be truly universal and should not be denied to those in need because of their condition, age, where they come from, or when they arrive here. Providing affordable and accessible health care that clearly reflects these fundamental principles is a public good, moral imperative, and urgent national priority.

The U.S. Catholic bishops continue to urge the House and Senate to adopt legislation that:

- Ensures access to quality, affordable, life-giving health care for all;
- Retains longstanding requirements that federal funds not be used for elective abortions or plans that include them, and effectively protects conscience rights; and,
- Protects the access to health care that immigrants currently have and removes current barriers to access.

For details on the bishops' positions on health care, please visit [www.usccb.org/healthcare](http://www.usccb.org/healthcare).

We will continue to work vigorously to advance true health care reform that ensures affordability and access, keeps longstanding prohibitions on abortion funding, upholds conscience rights, and addresses the health needs of immigrants. Dialogue should continue and no legislation should be finalized until and unless these basic moral criteria are met. Without commenting on specific proposals that may be brought to the summit, we will work to ensure that legislation meets these criteria and will oppose legislation that does not meet them. We hope and pray that the Congress and the country will come together around genuine health care reform that protects the life, dignity, consciences, and health of all.

Sincerely,

Bishop William F. Murphy, Diocese of Rockville Centre  
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and  
Human Development

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston  
Chairman, Committee on Pro-life Activities

Bishop John Wester, Diocese of Salt Lake City  
Chairman, Committee on Migration