

**Note from Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth Bishop Kevin W. Vann:** I have a high respect and appreciation for Catholic health care professionals and the leaders of the Catholic Health Association, on whose board I sit and to which I am episcopal liaison for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. As my letter below to members of Congress who represent portions of the Fort Worth Diocese indicates, I join Cardinal George and the USCCB in opposing the Senate national health care reform bill because it allows for federal funds to be used to pay for abortions. I do not support the Catholic Health Association position that the Senate bill is acceptable. While reform of the national health care system to ensure that every persons has good and affordable basic health care is a long-sought goal of Catholic bishops and myself, such reform cannot come at the expense of dignity of life from the moment of conception until natural death.

March 15, 2010

Congressman Name  
House of Representatives  
Washington D.C. 20515-4306

SENT VIA FAX

Dear Congressman Name:

The Catholic Bishops of the United States have long supported good and affordable health care for every citizen, because health care is a basic human right. As the shepherd and teacher to 700,000 Catholics in the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, I believe health care reform must protect human life and dignity from conception to natural death, particularly the voiceless and the vulnerable.

Rockville Bishop William R. Murphy, Galveston-Houston Cardinal Daniel DiNardo and Salt Lake City Bishop John Wester outlined the position of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in a letter to members of the House of Representatives dated February 24, 2010. As a final vote on health care reform appears eminent, I join my fellow bishops in asking members of Congress to adopt legislation which includes the following:

- 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
- Protects the access to health care that immigrants currently have and removes current barriers to access.

Catholic Bishops believe the Senate health care reform legislation has major flaws which are real and must be addressed. As approved by the Senate, this bill:

- Provides for direct federal funding of elective abortions in community health centers
- Provides federal subsidies for health plans that cover such abortions, violating longstanding federal policy under the Hyde Amendment and similar laws
- Will force families to choose between their health needs and their consciences on abortion, by forcing all enrollees in many health plans to pay a separate fee solely for other people's abortions
- Fails to apply longstanding federal policy on the conscience rights of pro-life health care providers to the new funding provided under this bill.

I and all Catholic Bishops are grateful for your consistent and courageous votes to ensure that the national health care bill includes the existing prohibitions on federal funding for abortions by voting for the Stupak

Amendment. In short, the House bill simply follows current law. Unfortunately, the Senate version of health care reform does not contain the same stipulations. I urge you to insist that the final national health care reform legislation prohibits federal funding of abortions.

Outside the abortion context, neither bill has adequate conscience protection for health care providers, plans or employers.

We will have the much needed health care reform that protects the life, dignity, conscience and health of all only if you continue to provide strong and consistent moral and political leadership. I pray that God will continue to give you the strength and courage to withhold your vote for national health care reform if the legislation fails to address these fundamental problems.

Sincerely,

Bishop Kevin W. Vann JCD, DD  
Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth