Pass Respect for Rights of Conscience Act!

On August 1, the Obama Administration’s contraceptive and sterilization mandate went into effect. Congress must take action now to protect religious liberty and conscience rights. During the August recess, contact your Representative and two Senators. Urge Members to support and work for enactment of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179, S. 1467) this year, whether as a free-standing bill or as part of other legislation.

Recommended Actions:

- Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202-224-3121, or call your Members’ local offices. Additional contact info can be found on Members’ web sites at: www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.
- During the month of August, Members of Congress will be in their home districts and states. During this time, community leaders should meet with Members at their local offices. At town meetings and other public events, citizens should ask Members to support enactment of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act this year.
- Since Members monitor local media closely, write letters to the editor, especially in response to articles or editorials, and participate in radio or TV call-in shows.

Suggested Message: “Please support and work for the enactment of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179, S. 1467) this year. As of August 1, the Administration’s contraceptive mandate went into effect for most employers. This mandate requires most health plans to cover sterilization and contraceptives, including drugs that can cause an abortion, even when employers and employees have moral or religious objections.”

When: Please take action during Congress’ August recess.

Background

Under the new health care law, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) now requires most health plans under “preventive services for women” to cover services that many citizens find objectionable for moral and religious reasons. These objectionable services include sterilization, 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 to all “women of reproductive capacity,” including minor girls. The HHS mandate allows only a very narrow exemption for a “religious employer.” Religious organizations providing education, health care and charitable services to all in need have a one-year delay in enforcement but do not qualify for the exemption. There is no exemption or delay for individuals, or for businesses owned and operated by individuals with moral or religious objections. Cardinal DiNardo, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, wrote to Congress on August 3 renewing the bishops’ call for prompt action. See: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/conscience-protection/upload/Cardinal-DiNardo-s-August-2012-Letter-to-Congress-Regarding-Conscience-Protection.pdf.

The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act provides protection of the religious beliefs and moral convictions of those who participate in the health care system. By incorporating protection of conscience rights into the new health care law, it will ensure respect for conscience in the face of the new contraceptive mandate. It must become law as soon as possible. Thanks! Updated 8/3/12