

ACTION ALERT: BISHOPS RENEW CALL TO LEGISLATIVE ACTION ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

TO: State and Territorial Court Regents and Legislative Chairs

FROM: Margaret Sitte, National Legislative Chair, Catholic Daughters of the Americas

DATE: February 11, 2012

Action Requested: Continue to contact members of Congress to co-sponsor the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. For an updated list of co-sponsors, please go to thomas.loc.gov and check [H.R. 1179](#) and [S. 1467](#). Ask House members to co-sponsor H.R. 1179. Ask Senators to co-sponsor S. 1467. Contact members of the U.S. House and Senate through e-mail, phone calls or FAX. Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121, or call the local offices of your Congressman and Senators. Full contact information can be found at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

Message: Please co-sponsor H.R. 1179 in the House and S. 1467 in the Senate, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. This measure will ensure that those who participate in the health care system retain the right to provide, purchase, or enroll in health coverage that is consistent with their religious beliefs and moral convictions.

Background: The Catholic bishops have issued a new call to legislative action on religious liberty. Their main three reasons are in bold below.

The new regulatory changes are limited and unclear. Last week's announcement by the President has some thinking that the HHS mandate has been resolved, but nothing could be further from the truth. The President has done two things.

First, he has decided to retain HHS's nationwide mandate of insurance coverage of sterilization and contraception, including some abortifacients. This is both unsupported in the law and remains a grave moral concern.

Second, the President has announced some changes in how that mandate will be administered, which is still unclear in its details.

Rescission of the mandate is the only complete solution. The lack of clear protection for key stakeholders--for self-insured religious employers; for religious and secular for-profit employers; for secular non-profit employers; for religious insurers; and for individuals--is unacceptable and must be corrected. And in the case where the employee and insurer agree to add the objectionable coverage, that coverage is still provided as a part of the objecting employer's plan, financed in the same way as the rest of the coverage offered by the objecting employer. This, too, raises serious moral concerns.

Continue urging passage of Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. The proposal continues to involve needless government intrusion in the internal governance of religious institutions, and to threaten government coercion of religious people and groups to violate their most deeply held convictions. In a nation dedicated to religious liberty as its first and founding principle, we should not be limited to negotiating within these parameters. The only complete solution to this religious liberty problem is for HHS to rescind the mandate of these objectionable services.

The bishops' statement concludes, "We will therefore continue--with no less vigor, no less sense of urgency--our efforts to correct this problem through the other two branches of government. For example, we renew our call on Congress to pass, and the Administration to sign, the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. And we renew our call to the Catholic faithful, and to all our fellow Americans, to join together in this effort to protect religious liberty and freedom of conscience for all."

Reminder: Make contact as an individual citizen using your name and address—not as a member of Catholic Daughters.

Approved: Joanne Tomassi, National Regent