



REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE ON HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATION

August 20, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We seek your support in helping the Catholic Church throughout the United States have a strong voice in shaping the current health care reform legislation before Congress. The Catholic Church has long recognized access to health care as a fundamental common good and an essential component of a free society. For decades, the Church has recommended that all people have access to quality health care, especially the poor and the vulnerable, and has demonstrated this at its health care facilities which currently serve 1 out of 6 patients in the US. We remain committed to this goal; one we believe is consistent with the values of the Gospel.

Representatives receiving the most attention. While the bill has commendable parts, it also raises grave concerns for Catholics around the issues of abortion, abortion funding, conscience rights of health care providers and religious institutions and end-of-life care.

The present version of the House bill, if passed, would give the Secretary of Health and Human Resources the power to make unlimited abortion a mandated benefit in the public insurance plan. This plan would be managed by the federal government and those choosing or funding this option would be forced to pay directly and specifically for unlimited abortion coverage. Currently, no federal program mandates this type of coverage or subsidizes health plans that include unlimited abortions. This is a regressive and unacceptable move for us as a nation.

In addition, we believe any health care reform must maintain present federal statutes for conscience protections of health care workers and religious institutions regarding abortion and other procedures we find morally objectionable.

We believe it is imperative that Catholics throughout North Carolina contact their U.S. Representatives and Senators to inform them that if this legislation becomes a vehicle for expanded access to abortion and a weakening of conscience protections of health care workers and religious institutions, it must and will be defeated.

It is also important that members of Congress understand that health care reform legislation should never jeopardize those near the end of life. There is strenuous debate at this moment over whether part of the health care reform legislation before Congress would indirectly lead to cost-cutting by euthanasia through "end-of-life consultations." Although the bill states that these consultations are not mandatory, the possibility of this unintended consequence in the language of Section 1233 of HR 3200 appears to be ambiguous. There should be no ambiguity here. At the very least, this section should be amended in such a way that no one will ever be required to participate in such a consultation and that there would be no penalty, either in compensation or coverage, for those who decline to participate.

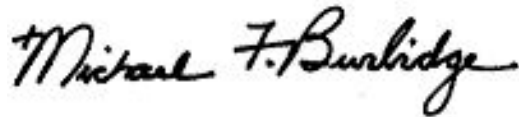
We have been informed by officials of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that Section 1233 is likely to be omitted from the bill. While we find this news encouraging, it is no guarantee this section will be removed. We ask you to remain vigilant on its status as the bill works its way through Congress.

Members of Congress are home during August and some are listening very carefully to the views of their constituents in order to gauge what the voters will be willing to support. Now is the time to be heard. Catholics should make their views known respectfully, but firmly. We seek health care reform that improves access for those who cannot currently afford coverage, but unequivocally reject any policies that would require Americans to fund the evil of abortion unwillingly, weaken conscience protections of health care workers and religious institutions or be nudged towards a decision that might accelerate their death in contradiction to the will of God and their own.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Peter J. Jugis".

Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Michael F. Burbidge".

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Raleigh

What is Catholic Voice NC?

Established by Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis, Bishop of Charlotte, and Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop of Legislative Building on July 2, 2008, Catholic Voice NC (CVNC) is a nonpartisan advocacy organization giving Catholics in North Carolina a greater voice in matters of public policy.

How does Catholic Voice NC work?

CVNC encourages Catholics in the Dioceses of Charlotte and Raleigh to sign up to receive CVNC e-mail alerts from the Catholic bishops of North Carolina. When the two bishops concur that the Catholic Church's moral and social teaching can give guidance on a particular public policy matter under consideration, CVNC alerts are sent out highlighting Church teaching on the relevant topic and requesting CVNC participants' advocacy.

How does one join Catholic Voice NC?

Visit www.CatholicVoiceNC.org and click on the tab on the left side of the home page titled "Join Us." Registering should take less than one minute.