



Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities

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June 30, 2009

Dear House Appropriations Committee Member:

Last week the subcommittee considering the Financial Services appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2010 did something Congress has not done in over a decade: The subcommittee voted to rescind an amendment that prevents direct public funding of abortion in the United States.

The subcommittee's action effectively nullifies the Dornan amendment, which has prevented public funding of elective abortions in the nation's capital since 1989 (with a hiatus from Fiscal Year 1994 to 1996). Instead of continuing to bar use of all congressionally appropriated funds for such abortions, the subcommittee narrowed the ban to cover only "federal" funds so "local" funds may be used for abortions without limit or restraint. Because Congress controls and must appropriate all public funds for the District of Columbia, this distinction is a bookkeeping exercise only: The impact in terms of human lives will be exactly the same as if the amendment were reversed in its entirety. I join the Archdiocese of Washington in protesting against this action (see the Archdiocese's June 26 statement at www.adw.org/news/news.asp).

While some may try to defend this action in terms of "home rule" for the District, in fact some other current bans on the District's use of all public funds (e.g., for personal use of public vehicles or to weaken laws on use of controlled substances) have been left intact in the bill. This is an action to promote publicly funded abortion, presumably the first step in a broader effort to restore such funding throughout the federal government. This misguided campaign neglects three realities.

First, public funding of abortion is rejected by the American people, as numerous surveys of public opinion have shown. The strength of this public opposition was recently demonstrated when Catholics throughout the United States sent tens of millions of postcards to their elected representatives in Congress, opposing the "Freedom of Choice Act" as well as any weakening or reversal of current appropriations riders on abortion.

Second, no lawmaker or Administration can support such a policy change and still claim to support "reducing abortions." The evidence is overwhelming, and universally recognized by groups on all sides of the abortion issue, that the availability of public funds for abortion greatly *increases* abortions. A study published by the Guttmacher Institute, for example, has found that the abortion rate among women in the Medicaid program more than *doubles* (from 35 abortions per 1000 women to 89 per 1000) if they live in a state that funds abortions in Medicaid (R. Jones et al., "Patterns in the

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions in 2000-2001,”
Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, vol. 34 (2002), 226-235 at 231).

Third, this action takes place as Congress is working to win broad support for a much-needed major reform of our health care system. A key issue in this debate is whether any open-ended or general language on benefits in such legislation will be exploited to begin funding abortions or mandating abortion coverage. The subcommittee’s action signals that this is a serious concern. Such action can only increase distrust of reform efforts at a time when mutual trust and cooperation are more needed than ever. This is the worst of all possible times to be injecting the divisive issue of public abortion funding into the debate on government health policy.

I urge you to reverse the subcommittee’s action, and restore the policy against publicly funded abortions in the District of Columbia that has been in effect for over a decade.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Justin Card. Rigali".

Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia
Chairman
USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities