



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Office of the
President

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+Saint John of Damascus
December 4, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Leader Jeffries:

As you finalize the conference process in order to pass the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, we urge your consideration of our perspective on four key issues of serious concern:

First, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has [called](#) on Congress to overturn the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) rule, allowing abortion in VA programs, as well as the Department of Defense (DOD) memorandum on "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," providing, among other problematic provisions, administrative leave and paid travel allowances for servicemembers to obtain elective abortions. We urge Congress to provide authentic support for women, children, and families while ensuring that federal resources are not used to facilitate, promote, or provide abortion. Undoing the DOD and VA policies would restore and be aligned with longstanding Hyde principles. The USCCB, therefore, urges retention of the provision in the House NDAA which would prohibit payment and reimbursement by the DOD for expenses relating to abortion services.

Second, the Catholic Church recognizes life from the moment of conception and, thus, we [oppose](#) the expansion of access to assisted reproductive technologies (ART), such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), that result in the destruction or interminable freezing of millions of unborn children. As pastors, we grieve with the many families who struggle with infertility and we [support](#) restorative reproductive fertility methods, which are an ethical and comprehensive approach to address the root causes of infertility and which are often more effective and affordable. Consequently, we strongly oppose the NDAA's proposed expansion of TriCare coverage for IVF and urge that this coverage be excluded from any final bill.

President

The Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
Archbishop for the Military Services



Additionally, the USCCB has consistently joined with each of you and many others in expressing support for individuals who risked their lives and the lives of their family members to assist the U.S. mission and U.S. personnel in Afghanistan. This includes [efforts](#) to aid Afghan families through Operation Allies Welcome and Operation Enduring Welcome. We reaffirm the moral imperative to provide full and permanent integration for those already relocated to the United States and to continue facilitating lawful pathways for those who remain outside of the country and vulnerable to persecution because of their assistance. To those ends, we urge you to include as part of the NDAA: (1) provisions providing Afghan parolees in the United States with the ability to apply for permanent status with a pathway to citizenship; (2) codification of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE), which [received](#) overwhelming bipartisan support in the House recently; and (3) authorization of additional Special Immigrant Visas.

Finally, we note that another area of difference in the House and Senate NDAA proposals is in regard to military conscription for women. The USCCB has long [held](#) that the practice of making military service an option for women, but not an obligation, has served us well as a society. As a result, we oppose the Senate bill's provision requiring women be automatically registered to the Selective Service.

We thank you for your leadership and for your dedication to supporting our country's service members through the NDAA. We hope you will continue to do so in a manner that genuinely supports women, children, and families and does not contribute to the destruction of life.

Sincerely,

(The Most Reverend) Timothy P. Broglio
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

(The Most Reverend) Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop for the Diocese of Toledo
Chairman, Committee for Pro-Life Activities

(The Most Reverend) Mark J. Seitz
Bishop for the Diocese of El Paso
Chairman, Committee on Migration

President

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