



## Health Care Alert

### Health Care Action Alert

Take Action!

**Action Needed:** The full Senate is considering their health care reform bill. The bishops are strongly urging the Senate to incorporate essential changes to the Senate's health care reform bill to ensure that needed health care reform legislation truly protects the life, dignity, consciences and health of all. This message is consistent with the position of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops. **The amendment could come to the Senate floor as early as today! Please contact your Senators today!**

**1. Ask your Senators to stand for fairness in health care reform.** For far too long, legal immigrants have been denied the opportunity to gain access to affordable health insurance. Under the Senate health care reform plan, legal immigrants are required to have health insurance, but must wait five years before they can access insurance programs like Medicaid. Now, the Senate has their first chance to make things better for these communities.

Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) has joined with five other policymakers to introduce Senate Amendment 2991 to health care reform legislation, which would give states the option to eliminate the five-year waiting period for lawfully residing immigrants who need access to Medicaid.

Ask your Senators to vote against amendments being offered Senators Ensign (R-NV) and Jeff Sessions (R-AL) that would create barriers to immigrants from obtaining health care coverage for which they are eligible. Votes on these amendments could come in the next few of days.

**2. Ask your Senators to include language that maintains the long-standing federal prohibition on federal funds for abortion and to safeguard conscience rights.**

The amendment offered by Senators Ben Nelson (D-NE) , Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Robert Casey (D-PA) that like the Stupak amendment that was included in the final House bill, would have prevented this legislation from mandating abortion coverage or providing federal funds for coverage that includes elective abortions. Those wishing to purchase abortion coverage would still be able to continue to do so with their own private funds, but not in the government-run health care plan ("community health insurance option") or with the help of federal subsidies.

The Senate voted to "table the amendment." Urge Senators to uphold longstanding policies against abortion funding, and please protect conscience rights in health care reform.

**ACTION:** Contact Members now through e-mail, phone calls or FAX letters. 1) Send an e-mail or 2) Call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at: 202-224-3121, or call your Members' local offices. Full contact info can be found on Members' web sites at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

**MESSAGE-SENATE:** "Please support the Menendez amendment that provides fairness to legal immigrants and oppose amendments that are harmful to immigrants and the health care of their families. Support language in the manager's amendment to uphold longstanding policies against abortion funding and protect conscience rights in health care reform. "

**WHEN:** Today! The Senate spent the weekend working on spending bills and will resume debate on the health care bill today.

**WATCH FOR ADDITIONAL ACTION ALERTS!** As the Senate continues to consider amendments to the health care bill on abortion funding, conscience protections, improving affordability and coverage and protecting immigrants' health care, the USCCB will send Action Alerts to update you on advocacy needed to support health care legislation that protects the life and dignity of all people from conception until natural death.