



## *Pro-Life Activities*

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

**DATE:** March 16, 2009  
**FROM:** Sr. Mary Ann Walsh  
**O:** 202-541-3200  
**H:** 301-587-4762

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Message Spread on Web Sites, YouTube  
Don't Move From 'Democracy to Despotism,' Cardinal Francis George Warns  
Alert Health, Human Services to Danger in Rescinding Conscience Protections**

**CARDINAL GEORGE URGES CATHOLICS TO TELL ADMINISTRATION: KEEP  
CONSCIENCE PROTECTIONS FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS**

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Francis George is urging Catholics in the United States to tell the Obama Administration to retain Health and Human Services regulations governing conscience protections for health care workers.

This is vital to keep the government from “moving our country from democracy to despotism,” said Cardinal George, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He delivered the message via video available on the Web at <http://www.usccb.org/conscienceprotection> and on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NoCRwMqVzQ>

Those who want to protect conscience rights can speak out through an action alert at <http://www.usccb.org/conscienceprotection>

“Respect for personal conscience and freedom of religion as such ensures our basic freedom from government oppression. No government should come between an individual person and God—that’s what America is supposed to be about,” Cardinal Francis George said. “This is the true common ground for us as Americans. We therefore need legal

protection for freedom of conscience and of religion—including freedom for religious health care institutions to be true to themselves.”

“I ask you please to let the government know that you want conscience protections to remain strongly in place. In particular, let the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington know that you stand for the protection of conscience, especially now for those who provide the health care services so necessary for a good society,” he said.

Cardinal Francis George taped the message after the Obama Administration announced in early March that it was rescinding the regulations which guarantee that health workers cannot be forced to provide services that violate their consciences, including abortions.

His entire statement follows.

Hello. I am Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago and President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. I'd like to take a moment to speak about two principles or ideas that have been basic to life in our country: religious liberty and the freedom of personal conscience.

On Friday afternoon, February 27, the Obama Administration placed on a federal website the news that it intends to remove a conscience protection rule for the Department of Health and Human Services. That rule is one part of the range of legal protections for health care workers—for doctors, nurses and others—who have objections in conscience to being involved in abortion and other killing procedures that are against how they live their faith in God.

As Catholic bishops and American citizens, we are deeply concerned that such an action on the government's part would be the first step in moving our country from democracy to despotism. Respect for personal conscience and freedom of religion as such ensures our basic freedom from government oppression. No government should come between an individual person and God—that's what America is supposed to be about. This is the true common ground for us as Americans. We therefore need legal protection for freedom of conscience and of religion—including freedom for religious health care institutions to be true to themselves.

Conscientious objection against many actions is a part of our life. We have a conscientious objection against war for those who cannot fight, even though it's good to defend your country. We have a conscientious objection for doctors against being involved in administering the death penalty. Why shouldn't our government and our legal system permit conscientious objection to a morally bad action, the killing of babies in their mother's womb? People understand what really happens in an abortion and in related procedures—a living member of the human family is killed—that's what it's all about—and no one should be forced by the government to act as though he or she were blind to this reality.

I ask you please to let the government know that you want conscience protections to remain strongly in place. In particular, let the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington know that you stand for the protection of conscience, especially now for those who provide the health care services so necessary for a good society. Thank you and God bless you.

Keywords: Cardinal Francis George, abortion, Health and Human Services, democracy. Despotism, bishops, Catholics, conscientious objection, freedom of religion, conscience, conscience protection, religious liberty, death penalty

#####

09-058

SEC,DD,USNewswire,CNS,RNS,Crux