

BILL ON ABORTION RESTRICTIONS WELCOMED

The House of Representatives passed a bill on September 25, 229-189, that would allow those hospitals and insurance companies that refuse to perform or pay for abortions to do so without penalties; they may maintain access to Medicare and other federal funding. This issue obviously has grave implications for Catholic hospitals, which is why we issued a statement to the media.

We noted that “abortion-rights advocates are not, ipso facto, anti-Catholic for making Catholic hospitals comply with their vision of public policy.” Then came the qualifier: “But it remains true that there are many in the pro-abortion community who seek to levy penalties on Catholic hospitals because they are anti-Catholic (e.g., Catholics for a Free Choice, a group supported by the Democratic National Committee).”

This bill is so important because it protects real freedom of choice by insulating Catholic hospitals from those who would use the state to trump the doctrinal prerogatives of religious institutions.

The Bush administration won our praise because it championed this issue. “The free exercise of religion that Catholic institutions ought to enjoy without debate or rancor has now taken a giant leap forward,” we commented. It is our hope the Senate passes the bill without emendation, but we are not particularly optimistic about its chances.