

# BISHOPS AFFIRM CONSCIENCE RIGHTS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest battle for conscience rights:

“I cannot take the life of a child in one room and guide another child into this world in the next.”

Those are the words of Regina Frost, a Christian doctor who earlier this year expressed her disdain for Planned Parenthood and the state of New York when they went to court seeking to force medical professionals to perform abortions. As an OB-GYN, Frost took umbrage at the audacity of these “pro-choice” enthusiasts. It is quite obvious that the pro-abortion industry respects neither the choice of the child to be born nor the choice of people like Dr. Frost not to participate in abortions.

This issue is now back in the news. The Department of Justice filed a civil lawsuit on December 16 against the University of Vermont Medical Center for reportedly forcing medical professionals to perform an abortion against their will. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say this issue *should be back in the news*: aside from the Associated Press, the only media outlets covering this story are Catholic and conservative ones.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan is the chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee for Religious Liberty, and Archbishop Joseph Naumann is chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities. They issued a strong statement commending the Trump Administration for defending conscience rights by “taking corrective action” against the University of Vermont Medical Center.

In 2018, a nurse at this medical center in Burlington, Vermont

filed a conscience and religious discrimination complaint with the Office of Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. against the facility. The nurse's objections to abortion were well known by those who worked there, yet they pulled a fast one on her—she was not told that she had to participate in an abortion until she entered the room.

What this nurse had to endure should never have happened. In 1973, just weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in its infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision, Congress enacted the Church Amendment (named after Idaho Senator Frank Church). It prohibited courts and government agencies from forcing healthcare workers from performing an abortion if they morally objected. The vote was 92-1.

In a related case, *Doe v. Bolton*, decided the same day as *Roe*, Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun (he wrote the majority opinion in both cases) took up the question of forcing someone to perform an abortion. He said that “a physician or any other employee has the right to refrain, [410 U.S. 179, 198] for moral or religious reasons from participating in the abortion procedure.”

It is a sign of just how sick our society has become that well into the 21st century we are still fighting for the conscience rights of employees who do not want to assist in the killing of another human being. Even sicker is the prospect of a self-professed Catholic president waiting in the wings to undo all the religious liberty achievements of the Trump administration, including the right to abstain from participating in an abortion.