

# BISHOPS STAND FAST ON HEALTH CARE

A day before the State of the Union address, the U.S. bishops released a letter imploring Congress to move forward with health care reform. A plea for the president to do the same was issued by 23 progressive religious leaders. The difference between the letters was striking, and the reaction to the bishops was sharp.

The bishops reiterated their call for universal health care, standing fast on the need to protect conscience rights and the rights of the unborn. *New York Times* journalist David D. Kirkpatrick, however, called out the bishops by claiming, “Now that the legislation appears to be near death, the bishops are on the other side.”

The bishops never switched positions: No organization in the nation has been more consistent in its support for health care reform than them. It is hardly a new position that the bishops don’t support federal funding of abortion and the protection of the conscience rights of health care workers. Practicing Catholics believe that abortion is “intrinsically evil,” thus it has no legitimate place in any health care legislation.

Sarah Posner, a left-wing writer, was furious with the bishops. She spoke derisively of their commitment to “life-giving” health care; she argued that their real “motive” is to “normalize and expand their agenda on reproductive care”; she accused them of pursuing a “divide and conquer strategy”; she contended that they seek “to portray themselves as the heroes” after “they’ve absolved themselves of responsibility for holding the House bill hostage”; and so forth. In other words, she considers them opportunists.

The letter by religious progressives never mentioned any

objection to abortion or the need for conscience rights, though it did conclude by citing their dedication to “helping the vulnerable.” It’s sad that the unborn were not counted among the vulnerable.