

BISHOPS STAND FAST ON HEALTH CARE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest statement by the bishops on health care reform:

The day before President Obama's State of the Union address, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released a letter imploring the Congress to move forward with health care reform. A plea to the president to do the same was put forth by 23 progressive religious leaders. But the contents of the letters were strikingly different, and the reaction to the bishops has been 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, calls out the bishops by claiming, "Now that the legislation appears to be near death, the bishops are on the other side." Wrong. They never switched positions. Indeed, no organization in the nation has been more consistent in its support for health care reform than the USCCB. That the bishops do not support forcing the taxpayers to pay for abortions, and that they care deeply about the conscience rights of doctors and nurses, is hardly a new position. Practicing Catholics believe abortion is "intrinsically evil," thus it has no legitimate place in any health care legislation.

Sarah Posner, a left-wing writer, is furious with the bishops. She speaks derisively of their commitment to "life-giving" health care; she argues that their real "motive" is to "normalize and expand their agenda on reproductive care"; she accuses them of pursuing a "divide and conquer strategy"; she contends 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, because the bishops have stuck to their guns, they're the opportunists!

The letter by religious progressives never mentions any objection to abortion or the need for conscience rights, though it does conclude by citing their dedication to "helping the vulnerable." Nice to know that these religious leaders don't count the unborn among the vulnerable.