

CONSCIENCE RIGHTS DEFEATED

In April an amendment that would have protected conscience rights of healthcare providers was defeated in the U.S. Senate. The amendment was proposed in light of the Obama administration's plans to rescind the rule, which was issued in December by the department of health and human services (HHS), that protects the right of healthcare workers at federally funded facilities to refuse to perform or be involved in medical procedures that would violate their conscience.

The failure of the Obama administration and the Senate to protect freedom of conscience is an outrageous violation of human rights and a slap in the face to Catholics. No one in the healthcare field should ever be compelled by law to perform or assist in a procedure that violates his conscience. This should be an elementary right, yet there are those who want to trespass on it.

Francis Cardinal George, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has called upon Catholics to let the government know that conscience protection is a fundamental right. He expressed concern that reversal of the current rule "would be the first step in moving our country from democracy to despotism."

Failure to protect conscience rights, combined with overturning the Mexico City Policy, supporting the U.N. Population Fund, funding embryonic stem cell research and nominating radical abortion rights supporter Kathleen Sebelius to head HHS, sends the message to Catholics that their concerns are not important