

# CONSCIENCE RIGHTS DEFEATED

Yesterday an amendment introduced by Sen. Tom Coburn to protect the conscience of patients and healthcare providers was defeated by a vote of 56-41. 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 violate their consciences.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue spoke to this issue today:

"The failure of the administration and the Senate to protect freedom of conscience is an outrageous violation of human rights and a slap in the face to Catholics and other people of faith. 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 protections are fundamental rights of Americans. 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 the right of conscience, combined with overturning the Mexico City Policy, supporting the United Nations Population Fund, funding embryonic stem cell research and nominating radical abortion rights supporter Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to be the Secretary of HHS, sends the message to Catholics that their concerns are not important.

"We implore all lawmakers to reconsider this issue with an eye

toward restoring the conscience rights of healthcare workers.”