

# HHS MANDATE DISPUTE GOES UNREPORTED

Early in March, Rep. Diane Black of Tennessee had introduced a bill, The Health Care Conscience Rights Act. This bill, if passed, would challenge the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate and it would help protect the religious consciences of employers.

To date, however, there still has been little reporting on this bill by the mainstream media. The bill, which had the explicit support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), seeks to provide conscience rights protections in the field of health care. More specifically, the legislation would ensure that the ObamaCare regulation that forces employers to give coverage for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization and contraception, could not override the conscience rights of objecting parties.

Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, who heads the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, had written to every member of the House of Representatives on March 8th, asking for their support. He urged them to make this a priority, incorporating it in the upcoming "must-pass" legislation, writing: "The Catholic Church daily contributes to the welfare of American society through a network of schools, social services, hospitals and assisted living facilities... The legal protections which allow us to fulfill our obligation to serve others, without compromising our religious or moral convictions, are essential to the continued vitality of these ministries."

When it comes to Catholic issues, the big dailies don't lack for coverage. But on this dispute, which pits the bishops against the Obama administration, there has been a blackout. Among those not reporting on this story are the *New York*

*Times, the Wall Street*

*Journal, the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, the Chicago Tribune, the Miami Herald, the Dallas Morning News, the Houston Chronicle, the Denver Post, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Los Angeles Times.* The lone newspaper that covered this subject was the *Washington Times*. Not surprisingly, the failure of the aforementioned newspapers to report on this story accounts for the lack of coverage by the broadcast news programs, as well as cable TV.

Religious liberty should mean something even to those who aren't observant. The core issue is whether the federal government can impose a secular agenda on people of all faiths. Catholics particularly have been in this fight ever since the HHS mandate was introduced. For the media to ignore this issue is simply irresponsible.