

LAWMAKERS SEEK TO UNDO DAMAGE

Before the Obama edict mandating healthcare plans to cover abortifacients, contraception and sterilization was announced, there had already been legislation—held up in committee—in the House and the Senate that sought to protect religious liberties. After the edict was announced, these bills found new life and the backing of the U.S. bishops. The legislation, named “The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act,” was proposed by Rep. Jeff Fortenberry in the House and Sen. Roy Blunt in the Senate and was hailed by Timothy Cardinal Dolan saying that they would produce an “ironclad law simply saying that no administrative decrees of the federal government can ever violate the conscience of a religious believer individually or religious institutions.”

In addition to “The Respect for Rights of Conscience Act,” Sen. Marco Rubio introduced legislation in January designed to repeal the Obama edict. The Catholic community was delighted to learn of his courage in seeking to combat the Obama administration’s unprecedented assault on religious liberty.

If the administration were to get its way, Catholic non-profits would be forced to carry healthcare services that the Church deems immoral. What’s at stake is the First Amendment right to religious liberty, and nothing goes to the heart of this civil liberty more than conscience rights.

We appreciate all of the incredible support we have received from people of all faiths, as well as from some agnostics and atheists. We pledge to them that we will support our bishops in pursuing every legitimate remedy to this outrageous threat to religious liberty. Rubio properly titled his bill the “Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 2012.”