

OBAMA SEEKS RELIGIOUS SUPPORT FOR BILL

On August 19, President Barack Obama joined in a call-in and audio Webcast with religious leaders seeking to win their support for a health care bill. We issued a press release explaining why the Catholic bishops weren't on board.

Earlier in the month, Justin Cardinal Rigali, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, reaffirmed the bishops' position that it is unacceptable to include abortion funding in a health care reform bill. His letter was sent to every member of the House.

While commending some efforts to include protection for state laws regulating abortion, and leaving intact existing federal laws governing conscience rights, Rigali drew a line in the sand regarding two features of the House bill: (a) he objected to the provision that the Secretary of Health and Human Services would be empowered to mandate abortion coverage in the public plan, and (b) he labeled as a "legal fiction" and an "illusion" the argument that the bill doesn't, in effect, provide federal subsidies for abortion.

Cardinal Rigali was especially forceful in pointing out low-income Americans opposed to abortion will be **"forced by the federal government"** (his emphasis) to pay for abortions when they purchase the public plan. Which means that practicing Catholic non-white poor women will be forced to pay for the abortions of rich white women—women who equate abortion with a root canal.

We noted that it wasn't too late for Obama to get the bishops, and most Catholics, on board. He can bring them back to the table if he follows the model of his predecessors—bar the

government from funding abortions as a health care benefit. If he doesn't, if he sticks to his guns and seeks to coerce Americans into funding abortion, it will be a mistake of monumental importance.