

1. H.R. 5111 (Pitts/Lipinski bill): Fixing life and conscience problems in the new health care law

I hope you've seen our letter endorsing this new bill, and NCHLA's alert requesting help in getting House members who supported the Stupak amendment in November to become co-sponsors.

The bill now has 109 sponsors, including 12 Democrats. Two sponsors, one from each party -- Dan Lipinski (D-IL) and Joseph Cao (R-LA) -- voted for the House health care reform bill in November but opposed the final bill after the pro-life language we supported had been removed. One new sponsor added in May, Jerry Costello (D-IL), voted for the health care reform bill both times. This illustrates an argument in our letter to the House, that pro-life members can and should support this bill regardless of how they voted on the final health care law. Even people who disagreed on whether the final bill was too deficient to support can surely agree that these changes are worthwhile improvements. This is an opportunity for new common ground, and we hope Rep. Costello will be joined by others in his situation.

Recently law professor Timothy Jost, who had criticized our efforts on the Stupak amendment in November, published an article in *Commonweal* magazine critiquing our letter in support of H.R. 5111. Some of his charges are old hat while others are new misreadings of the law and of the USCCB's position. I posted a response this week, which is attached here and can also be seen directly underneath his article on the magazine's web site: <http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/episcopal-oversight>.

2. Renewed Fight on Military Abortions

Recently the Senate Armed Services Committee approved an amendment by Senator Burris (D-IL) to the Defense authorization bill, reversing the ban on use of military facilities and personnel for elective abortions. (The House has passed this bill with the traditional policy intact.) We will support efforts in the Senate to restore the ban, then urge the House to stand firm in its own position if the Senate bill does not change. Attached is a recent letter to the Senate on this issue from the Archdiocese on Military Services; next week you will see a USCCB letter, and an alert from NCHLA at the appropriate time. We are not sure when this bill will come to the Senate floor, but it may not occur until after the July 4 recess.

3. FDA Plan to Approve Ulipristal ("Ella")

On June 17, an FDA advisory committee unanimously approved a plan to allow the use of the abortion drug ulipristal (trade name "Ella") for "emergency contraception" up to five days after unprotected sex or contraceptive failure. Unlike the already approved drug known as "Plan B," ulipristal is a close analogue to the abortion drug RU-486 which can destroy a newly conceived unborn child both before and after implantation. It therefore marks a new and more definitive step toward destroying any distinction between contraception and abortion. Cardinal DiNardo has written to the FDA

commissioner protesting against this development, and we will be saying and writing a great deal more about it to educate policy makers and others. One good source of medical documentation on this is the testimony submitted to the FDA by the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, cited in the footnote of the Cardinal's letter.

I hope these updates are helpful. My thanks to all our directors who continue to rise to every challenge involving the protection of innocent human life!