



NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN

U.S. Catholic Bishops Major Force Behind War on Women *Statement of NOW President Terry O'Neill*

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The collusion of House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has led to an open declaration of war on the women of this country. The bishops have long sought to enshrine into law those policies of the Catholic Church that subordinate women. And they don't care how badly women get hurt in the process.

In the last election, the bishops helped to elect legislators that would do their bidding, which includes enacting dangerous and discriminatory bills denying women safe, accessible and affordable abortion care and family planning, even encouraging hospitals to let women die in the name of 'life.'

A recent poll shows abortion 'barely registers' among voter priorities, and yet Speaker Boehner has declared barring federal funding for abortion care a 'highest priority' -- responding not to the call of his constituents but to the demands of the bishops. And it turns out abortion isn't the only target, as evidenced by their stunningly dangerous efforts that, if enacted, can and will result in the preventable deaths of women:

- The proposed continuing resolution passed by the House to temporarily keep the government functioning would zero out Title X family planning, which has never covered abortion care. Should this gain traction in the Senate, millions of women, the vast majority of whom have incomes of less than \$11,000 per year, will lose access to pap smears, testing for sexually transmitted infections, and contraception. It is a public health nightmare -- but a dream-come-true for the Catholic bishops.
- HR 358, which many are calling the 'Let the Women Die Act' not only brings back Rep. Joe Pitts' (R-Pa.) rejected Stupak-Pitts proposition from health care reform, but also encourages providers to refuse training, performance and even referral of abortion care. This bill gives our government's 'blessing' to any emergency room that would let a pregnant woman die rather than perform an abortion procedure that could save her life.
- HR 3, also known as 'Stupak on Steroids,' would enshrine the Hyde Amendment into law and expand it to impose tax penalties on millions of families and businesses whose private insurance covers abortion care, thereby expanding the scope of Internal Revenue Service audits to the area between women's legs. In testifying in favor of this bill in committee, a representative from the Catholic bishops proudly supported revoking abortion rights even in cases of rape. You read that right -- and isn't that rich, coming from the very men who have consistently protected sexually abusive priests?
- And HR 217, which NOW has dubbed the 'Public Health Nightmare Act,' would permanently eliminate Title X family planning services, leaving millions of women and men stranded without essential services like birth control, cancer screenings and screenings for HIV/AIDS and STDs.

Pro-life? Hardly.

Not only are these assaults on women's rights at odds with generally accepted medical practice and flatly unethical, there is little doubt that they *will* kill women.

The National Organization for Women is fighting back against these efforts in coalition with our allies and women's health advocates across the country. We also renew our demand that the federal government require the all-male and violently anti-woman U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops follow the same lobbying and disclosure requirements that currently apply to everyone else.

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