

## PRESS RELEASE

### **National Conscience Protection Grassroots Campaign Launched**

***Catholic Laity can receive toolkit to contact Congress at [www.ProtectOurConscience.org](http://www.ProtectOurConscience.org)***

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Catholic Advocate, a leading grassroots organization in Washington, D.C., today launched a nationwide campaign providing resources for faithful Catholics wanting to speak out against the recently announced Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) final rule affecting conscience protections in health care coverage. The ruling forces organizations providing health plans to cover contraception, abortifacients, and sterilization regardless of their religious beliefs.

“One of the options to address this attack on people of faith is to directly contact our elected officials in Congress to let them know our dissatisfaction with this decision,” said Catholic Advocate President Matt Smith. “Our goal is to have at least 100,000 faithful Catholics participate each month until Congress acts.”

On the day of the HHS announcement, Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) called the laity to this action when he said, “Let your elected leaders know that you want religious liberty and rights of conscience restored and that you want the administration’s contraceptive mandate rescinded.”

Catholic Advocate is asking for at least one leader per parish in this country to sign up at [www.ProtectOurConscience.org](http://www.ProtectOurConscience.org). There they will have access to a grassroots toolbox to answer the call to rally faithful laity to reinstate our conscience rights.

“There are 17,782 parishes in the United States,” added Smith. “If faithful Catholics were able to average 115 letters per parish to their Representative and each Senator, Capitol Hill would receive over six million contacts on this issue. We would send a powerful message that cannot be ignored.”

A primary focus of this nationwide grassroots campaign is building additional support for H.R. 1179/S. 1467 – the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act introduced by Representative Jeff Fortenberry (Nebraska, 1<sup>st</sup> District) and Senator Roy Blunt (Missouri) respectively.

The legislation amends the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) “to permit a health plan to decline coverage of specific items and services that are contrary to the religious beliefs of the sponsor, issuer, or other entity offering the plan or the purchaser or beneficiary (in the case of individual coverage) without penalty.” It also applies similar guidance to state health insurance exchange programs and becomes retroactive to when PPACA was signed into law by President Obama.

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