



## Capitol Comments: Health Care Reform - To Support or not Support? Is that *really* the question?

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The August recess is over and Congress is back to work where they left off—on health care reform. Now before you think, “not *another* health care reform article,” and start to turn the page, let’s see how you fare on the following quiz:

The US Bishops:

- a) Oppose health care reform that fails to recognize and uphold the dignity of all human life
- b) Support health care reform that pursues the common good and provides access for all, especially the poor

And the answer is...the US Bishops support **both** of the above statements. If you are unsure how the Bishops can support both, you are not alone. In August, the New York Times published an article claiming that despite 30 years of work to promote universal health insurance, leaders of the US Conference of Bishops determined that lawmakers ought to block the entire health care reform effort.

It is true that several Bishops around the country have issued critical statements regarding elements in health care reform legislation. However, it is clear that the Times article’s author fails to recognize that criticisms of current health care reform proposals do not signify outright opposition to health care reform overall. The Bishops have provided guidelines for moral and ethically responsible health care reform and certainly will critique attempts at reform that do not fit those guidelines. Individual bishops’ statements denote holes in current legislation that fail to uphold the dignity of all human life, but stand firm in the conviction that access to health care should be available to all.

In the initial letter on behalf of the US Bishops, Bishop William Murphy, Chairman of the US Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, states that “genuine health care reform that protects the life and dignity of all is a moral imperative and a vital national obligation.” It clear that all people at all stages of life are recognized benefactors of health care.

As Catholics, it shouldn’t surprise us that sometimes secular media does not interpret the actions of our church leaders correctly. Why? Because the media views the teaching of our Church and its leaders with the eyes of the world—in this case, a partisan world that is often self-interested—and with the intent to gain profit, often doing so by crafting articles with an emphasis on controversy and sensationalism. The Bishops’ message regarding health care reform—mainly that reform promote the dignity of all human life—is more easily digested by Catholic faithful who recognize that real truth does not come from partisan philosophy or a doctrine of self-interest, but rather from the teachings of Jesus and his Church.

A recent US Conference media blog post states: “Ultimately, the bishops aren’t supporting anybody’s plan without question or opposed to the notion of reforming health care. They’re being bishops ... considering the moral dimensions of public proposals and proclaiming the teaching of the Church.” As faithful citizens, it is our responsibility to form our consciences by the teachings and the teachers of our faith, weighing proposals to reform health care on their furtherance of the pursuit of common good, but never condoning methods that refuse dignity to all people at all stages of life.

Get news on Health Care Reform from the US Bishops’ Conference at [www.USCCB.org/healthcare](http://www.USCCB.org/healthcare).