

Cardinal urges Senate to drop abortion funding

Nancy Frazier O'Brien Catholic News Service | Nov. 16, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo called on members of the U.S. Senate to remove four provisions "that pose a direct threat to innocent human life" from a package of three appropriations bills for fiscal 2012.

"At a time when Congress is tempted to reduce even vitally important programs that serve the poorest and neediest people here and abroad, the moral wrong of expanding subsidies for direct violations of human life and dignity is especially egregious," said the archbishop of Galveston-Houston, who chairs the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The Senate was debating H.R. 2354, which covers FY 2012 funding for energy/water, financial services and state/foreign operations, during the week of Nov. 14.

Cardinal DiNardo said four senators had agreed to propose amendments to remove the four objectionable provisions:

-- Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., was to offer an amendment restoring Congress' long-standing ban on coverage of elective abortions in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, which the financial services bill would permit as currently written.

-- Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb., was to propose modifications to the financial services bill to retain the current prohibition on the use of congressionally appropriated funds for elective abortions in the District of Columbia.

-- Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., was to offer an amendment eliminating from the state/foreign operations bill a proposed appropriation of \$40 million to the United Nations Population Fund, despite what the cardinal called "that agency's continued support for a brutal program of coerced abortion and involuntary sterilization in China."

-- Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, was to propose changes to the state/foreign operations bill to remove a provision that would permanently ban restoration of the Mexico City policy, which during the Reagan and Bush administrations blocked U.S. funding of foreign nongovernmental organizations that perform and promote abortion as a form of family planning.

"In fact the bill's provision sweeps even more broadly, so that no harmful or destructive 'health or medical service' may render an organization ineligible for U.S. funds if that 'service' is permitted in the host country and 'would not violate United States law,'" Cardinal DiNardo noted.

"This last requirement is almost meaningless, as even infanticide, euthanasia and other lethal procedures are generally forbidden by individual state laws and not by United States law," he added. "In short, this provision effectively say that if a foreign nation allows medical personnel to abuse men, women and children, the United States will subsidize the perpetrators."

Cardinal DiNardo's Nov. 14 letter followed a visit to Capitol Hill earlier in the month by Auxiliary Bishop Denis J. Madden of Baltimore, vice chairman of the board of Catholic Relief Services, and a group of interfaith leaders asking senators to oppose reductions in poverty-focused development and humanitarian programs abroad in the foreign operations budget.

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