



The National Catholic Bioethics Center

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Bioethics and Public Policy Report [Click on Endnotes for More Information]

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The *National Scene*: A book of interviews with Pope Benedict XVI has been mistakenly reported as containing a change in the Church's teaching on the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV. Fr. Joseph Fessio, SJ provides a more accurate translation of the Holy Father's statements. See <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2010/11/23/guestview-did-the-pope-justify-condom-use-in-some-circumstances/>. ▪ This month, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops elected as president **Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York**, who stated that he would continue the bishops' opposition to the public funding of programs that provide coverage for abortion. The *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA)* contains provisions which violate human life and conscience.¹ The **National Institute of Medicine** held hearings on the definition of prevention services in the *PPACA*. (The NCBC submitted comments to the US Department of Health and Human Services on this matter.²) The panel of experts included no one from Catholic health care, or those reflective of natural family planning, while replete with representatives of organizations which would benefit from such mandated coverage. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) representative provided testimony to the fact that pregnancy is not a disease to be prevented, but a normal state; and hormonal contraceptives bear serious risks that can compromise a woman's health, causing, not preventing illness.³ ▪ The **Obama administration's evidenced based sex education grants** have included 12 abstinence-only programs. The US Department of Health and Human Services funded 115 sex education programs in 38 states and the District of Columbia. Emphasis will be on replicating sex education programs that have been "proven effective through rigorous evaluation," as well as funding "innovative strategies" in teen pregnancy prevention.⁴ ▪ Pope Benedict XVI opened the new liturgical year by celebrating a **Vigil for All Nascent Human Life** at St. Peter's Basilica. Pope Benedict requested that "all diocesan bishops (and their equivalent) of every particular church preside in analogous celebrations involving the faithful in their respective parishes, religious communities, associations and movements." The USCCB's Secretariats of Divine Worship and of Pro-Life Activities developed resources to help other parishes, religious communities and organizations participate.⁵ ▪ The Center for Reproductive Rights has filed a motion against the US FDA for failing to respond to a court order to reconsider permitting over-the-counter sales of **emergency contraception** to women of all ages (already available without a prescription to men and women ages 17 and older).⁶ ▪ Advanced Cell Technology received approval from the US FDA to use derivatives of

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embryonic stem cells in patients with Stargardt disease, a rare eye disease than can lead to blindness.⁷

The State of *Conscience/Religious Liberty*: On November 16, President Obama signed an Executive Order to implement the recommendations of the *President's Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships*. In part, the executive order states that a faith-based organization that participates in a social service program may retain religious terms in its name, select its board members on a religious basis, and include religious references in its organization's mission statements and other chartering or governing documents. However, it does require a referral for those seeking assistance with actions that violate the religious identity of the faith-based organization.⁸

The State of *Marriage*: The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a federal lawsuit in New York claiming that the federal *Defense of Marriage Act* is unconstitutional. At the same time an identical charge is claimed in a federal lawsuit filed in Connecticut by the Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders.⁹ The *Illinois General Assembly* is considering a proposal to legalize *civil unions*. In response, *Cardinal Francis George* has stated, in part, "Everyone has a right to marry, but no one has the right to change the nature of marriage."¹⁰

State by State: Diocesan advocacy offices and State Catholic Conference Directors are preparing for a new legislative season. • Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest has filed a lawsuit to overturn the will of the *Alaskan* people who voted in a ballot initiative to require *parental notification* before a minor can incur an abortion.¹¹ • The Council Bluffs City Council, Iowa voted unanimously to prevent late-term abortion practitioner LeRoy Carhart from obtaining land on which to build a new abortion facility.¹²

Recent *Good News*: The 47 member *Council of Europe* adopted Resolution 1763 (2010) on "the right to conscientious objection in lawful medical care." This was a significant win over anti-conscience advocates in Europe.¹³

Sharing Your Good News and Your Efforts: If there are public policy advocacy strategies which you wish to share with others please e-mail mhilliard@ncbcenter.org.

Sharing of *Resources*: The web page of the National Catholic Bioethics Center is a significant resource in the realm of bioethics: www.ncbcenter.org. Also, bioethicists are on call twenty-four hours a day, every day of the week, for consultation by calling 215-877-2660.

¹ <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2010/10-211.shtml>.

² <http://www.ncbcenter.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=482&storyid1277=124&ncs1277=3>.

³ <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/bishops-spokeswoman-urges-institute-of-medicine-committee-to-focus-on-life-saving-preventive-health-services-for-women-exclude-contraception-sterilization-108521424.html>.

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/27/AR2010102707471.html>.

⁵ www.usccb.org/prolife/papalvigil.

⁶ http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/News2?abbr=daily4 &page=NewsArticle&id=26849&security=1521&news_iv_ctrl=-1.

⁷ <http://www.lifenews.com/2010/11/22/bio-3216/>.

⁸ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/03/11/a-new-era-partnerships-advisory-council-faith-based-and-neighborhood-partnerships-pr>.

⁹ http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/11/10/Defense-of-Marriage-Act-challenged/UPI-87941289436556/.

¹⁰ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/11/23/catholics-oppose-civil-un_n_787623.html.

¹¹ http://www.nationalpartnership.org/site/News2?abbr=daily4 &page=NewsArticle&id=26855&security=1521&news_iv_ctrl=-1.

¹² <http://www.lifenews.com/2010/11/23/state-5690/>.

¹³ <http://www.christiannewswire.com/>.