

**Bishop on HHS mandate
In the Diocesan Loop e-newsletter
February 3, 2012**

HHS Rule – Educate and Take Action

On Jan. 20, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a final rule that the bishops of the United States consider a violation of the First Amendment and Freedom of Conscience. This rule, to be implemented in a year, requires “virtually all private health plans to include coverage for all FDA-approved prescription contraceptives, female sterilization procedures and related patient education and counseling for all women with reproductive capacity.” This is a very critical issue that calls us to put aside political differences and focus on urging protection of the inalienable right to life. We are called to work in a united fashion to repeal this rule so our mission of serving others can be done in accord with our religious and moral beliefs.

I urge you to learn about the HHS rule through information provided in our diocesan website and associated links. Also we are called to pray that our culture will find the way to commit ourselves to the dictates of the Natural Law and thus foster the inalienable right and gift of life on a universal basis.

An extremely useful resource is www.usccb.org/conscience, where you will find articles, press releases, background information – even a video message from Cardinal-elect Archbishop Timothy Dolan. You can find resources at dmdiocese.org/bishop-pates.cfm. This website provides a link to www.usccb.org/conscience.

I encourage you to take further action by contacting your legislators urging support of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179, S. 1467). The act would ensure that those who participate in the health care system “retain the right to provide, purchase or enroll in health coverage that is consistent with their religious beliefs and moral convictions.” Please urge our congressmen and senators to co-sponsor the measure. You can call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121, contact your congressman’s or senator’s local office, or obtain contact information at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov.