

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 19, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

During your commencement address to graduates at Notre Dame University, you indicated that you wanted to “honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion.” We agree with you that pro-life health care providers should have the right to refuse to participate in procedures that they find morally reprehensible.

Given our agreement in regard to a conscience clause, we respectfully request that you put an end to your Administration’s review of the Bush Administration rule that enforces existing conscience protection laws and completely forgo the rescinding of this rule. In addition, we urge you to commit to defending conscience protections in future rulemaking that affects both individual and institutional health care providers.

After listening to your address at Notre Dame, we are in agreement that it is in everyone’s best interests to reduce the number of abortions in this country. You said, “So let’s work together to reduce the number of women seeking abortions by reducing unintended pregnancies...” It is not enough to simply reduce the number of women seeking abortions—it is imperative that we reduce the overall number of abortions. We cannot reduce the number of abortions if we are funding abortion providers—instead, we should reduce the number of abortions by continuing the restrictions on abortion funding. The Alan Guttmacher Institute routinely issues reports that show approximately one-third of Medicaid eligible women carry their babies to term, rather than get an abortion, because of current funding bans like the Hyde amendment.

While the abortion debate is certainly divisive, we are heartened to have common ground with you, and appreciate your willingness to work toward a solution that will make a difference in the lives of many. Given the comments you made at Notre Dame this past weekend, we are confident that you will soon publicly forgo rescinding the Bush Administration conscience protection regulation. We urge you to use all the tools at your disposal to keep conscience protections in place and reduce the number of abortions in the United States. We look forward to working with you to protect the unborn, expectant mothers, and health care providers.

Sincerely,



F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress

