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CONSCIENCE RULE REMOVAL COUPLED WITH BUDGET CUTS COULD TRIGGER CA HEALTHCARE CRISIS

Medical professionals and lawmakers ask President Obama not to rescind conscience rule; want Governor Schwarzenegger to join them

SACRAMENTO, CA - California lawmakers, including Senate Minority Leader Dennis Hollingsworth and Senator George Runner, along with doctors in white coats, nurses and other healthcare professionals, said this morning on the North Steps of the Capitol that it is imperative the “conscience clause” rule is not rescinded, as President Barack Obama as indicated he will do in the near future.

The conscience clause protects those doctors, nurses and medical students who decline to perform procedures, like abortions, to which they are morally opposed. The issue of conscience rights for medical professionals is currently being decided by the Obama Administration.

How would a lack of conscience protection affect access to care in California? According a recent survey, 95% of faith-based doctors said they would stop practicing medicine if forced to choose between performing an abortion or losing their jobs. A total of 9,381,606 patients in California are cared for by 69 faith-based hospitals each year. Current projections also indicate a 200,000 physician shortage by 2025.

“In these times of budgetary crisis here in California, the regulation helps to ensure that our patients will have access to the doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals they depend on,” said Dr. Darilyn Falck, an emergency medical physician in Sacramento who represented the Christian Medical Association at the press conference.

Rescinding the conscience rule will not only have adverse effects on access to treatment and care in California but will also exacerbate the budget problems in the state.

“The loss of these faith-based physicians would have a devastating impact on health care access and would disproportionately hurt the poor and medically underserved populations, where often faith-based healthcare is their only option,” said Dr. Falck..

The group of doctors, under the [Freedom2Care](http://www.freedom2care.org) organization, also released a letter to President Barack Obama asking him to keep in place the conscience clause. Another letter went to California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, asking for his public support for the conscience clause and to join with the doctors and other healthcare professionals in asking the President to not rescind the rule.

“Many of the patients visiting faith-based hospitals, clinics and practices are uninsured or have Medicaid. Given the current crisis, in which millions of adults and children are losing coverage, California cannot afford to allow the Federal government to rescind the conscience clause. If it is rescinded, a healthcare crisis of greatest proportions would arise,” reads the letter to Governor Schwarzenegger.

“If the term ‘choice’ means anything at all, it must apply equally to those who support abortion and those who conscientiously object to it,” said William J. Cox, president of the Alliance of Catholic Health Care, in a statement released today.

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