



## *Pro-Life Activities*

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

**DATE:** June 19, 2007  
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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **CARDINAL RIGALI URGES HOUSE TO PRESERVE THE MEXICO CITY POLICY**

WASHINGTON—Cardinal Justin Rigali has urged the House of Representatives to support an amendment to the State/Foreign Operations Appropriations bill to preserve the Mexico City Policy.

As approved by committee, Section 622 of the bill would rescind the Mexico City Policy, which prevents U.S. family planning assistance from being channeled through groups that perform and promote abortion as family planning. “I am writing to urge your support for an amendment by Reps. Bart Stupak (D-MI) and Chris Smith (R-NJ) to delete this misguided provision,” wrote Cardinal Rigali in a June 18 letter to the House.

Cardinal Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia, is Chairman of the Committee for Pro-Life Activities, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The Mexico City Policy was first announced at the 1984 United Nations International Conference on Population in Mexico City, at which member nations urged governments to take appropriate steps “to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning, and whenever possible, provide for the humane treatment and counseling of women who have had recourse to abortion.” The United States said it would no longer fund nongovernmental organizations violating this international consensus. This policy has continued in law from 1984 to the present, except for an eight-year gap during the Clinton administration.

In his letter, Cardinal Rigali noted that the U.N. conference’s policy was supported not only by the United States, the Holy See, and many developed nations such as France, Italy and Germany, but also by the great majority of developing nations, many of whom resent Western efforts to promote abortion to them. He continued:

“This policy of excluding abortion from family planning programs was reaffirmed by member nations a decade later, at the U.N. population conference in Cairo -- despite the U.S. delegation’s support at that time for an international ‘right’ to abortion -- and at the U.N. Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, as well as by the U.N. General Assembly’s resolution of 2000 setting future directions for implementing the Beijing report.”

“This policy was never an imposition by the United States on reluctant developing nations, for it was enthusiastically supported by those nations,” Cardinal Rigali said. “Nor was it about opposition to family planning itself. On the contrary, the legislation creating the United States’ own domestic family planning program in 1970, Title X of the Public Health Services Act, has always prohibited funding ‘programs where abortion is a method of family planning’.” Supporters of the legislation saw such a policy as “essential,” said the Cardinal, due to evidence that including abortion in a family planning program can undermine its effectiveness. “Those who now oppose the Mexico City policy seem to be ignoring these realities,” Cardinal Rigali said. Moreover, “logic and common sense dictate that we cannot *reduce* abortions by supporting groups dedicated to *promoting* abortions. Such a policy is simply at war with itself,” he said.

“Respect for innocent human life, a due regard for the culture and the rights of vulnerable developing nations, and even the practical concerns of those committed to effective family planning programs all argue for the same conclusion,” the Cardinal said. “Therefore I urge you to support the Stupak/Smith amendment, so the Mexico City Policy can remain in effect.”

Cardinal Rigali said the appropriations bill also contains another serious problem, “a harmful provision nullifying the current allocation of one-third of AIDS prevention funds for abstinence programs that have proven to be very effective in Africa.” On that issue he urged House members “to follow the wise counsel in a letter from our Bishops’ Conference and Catholic Relief Services,” which supports maintaining this allocation.

*NOTE:* The full text of Cardinal Rigali’s letter can be found on the Web at <http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/abortion/mexicocity2007.pdf>.

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