

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, author of H.R. 1179, the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act*, which was introduced in March of last year, responded to House Speaker John Boehner's charge today to overturn the controversial Health and Human Services mandate that would require every American to pay for coverage for abortion-producing drugs and other procedures that some consider to be ethically divisive:

"I have worked for the last two years to lay the foundation for Congress to protect the religious liberty and conscience rights of every American who objects to being forced by the strong arm of government to pay for services to which they have deeply-held objections. More than just the religious liberty implications of this mandate, every American should have his or her right of conscience protected in health care as well. My colleague, Senator Roy Blunt, and I have worked steadily over the last year, in anticipation of the finalization of this troubling rule, to gather a strong bipartisan commitment from our fellow Members, and strong support from a wide array of leaders and organizations who are directly impacted by this rule.

"Congress could take action tomorrow on a sound, well-researched piece of legislation, not crafted in reactionary haste, for the benefit of the millions of American people who are calling for action from their government in a way we have never seen. I accept Speaker Boehner's charge, and intend to see H.R. 1179 through to a swift vote on the House Floor. Congress must take action on the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act*, and let our nation's capitol again stand for freedom of conscience. With so many Americans lacking faith in Congress' ability to affect positive change, this is undoubtedly the right thing to do."

Fortenberry's H.R. 1179 enjoys the endorsements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Right to Life Committee, Americans United for Life, and others. Numerous organizations, including the Christian Medical Association and Family Research Council, have urged support of the bill. It currently has a bipartisan 160 cosponsors.

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