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Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) today joined a large group of House and Senate colleagues of both parties to call for swift action on the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act*, a bill he introduced last March to protect the religious liberties and conscience rights of every American. The bill would put into place religious freedom and conscience protections that were effective prior to the 2010 health care law. It has gained considerable support since the Obama Administration's late January rule forcing Americans to pay for drugs and procedures they may find objectionable.

"We have come together to say it's time to act to protect Americans' most basic rights - our religious freedom and rights of conscience," Fortenberry said. "I am very pleased to stand with House and Senate colleagues of both parties to call for swift action on this bill."

"The final rule that was filed last Friday did not make any changes to the HHS mandate," said Congressman Dan Lipinski (D-IL). "We still need to pass the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act in order to protect the conscience rights of all Americans."

"The Obama administration believes its political goals trump religious liberty," said Congressman Jim Jordan (R-OH), Chairman of the Republican Study Committee. "Mr. Fortenberry's bill underscores what Americans know- the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom should not be compromised. I applaud his work."

"Plain and simple, President Obama's decision is an assault to the First Amendment," said Congressman Bob Latta (R-OH). "It is an accounting gimmick that ignores the conscience rights of Americans. The Obama administration has gone against 30 years of federal conscience protections with this rule. I am extremely disappointed that this regulation departs from that tradition and the religious liberty that is enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution."

"We have seen time and time again this Administration's willingness to insert the federal government into a situation where it does not have a role," Congressman Tim Scott (R-SC) said. "Through their 'pass it and see what's in it' approach to health care reform, we now see they have encroached on every American's First Amendment right to the freedom of religion. I was proud to cosponsor Congressman Fortenberry's legislation to prevent this from happening, and thank Jeff for his early leadership on this issue."

"Religious freedom is a cornerstone of our great nation," said Congressman Robert Aderholt (R-AL). "No individual or organization should be forced by the government to pay for services that they have a deep moral objection to. We have a duty as a Congress to protect the religious and conscience rights of all Americans and I am proud to join my colleagues in bipartisan support of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act."

The *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act* was introduced in March 2011. This measure would repeal the controversial mandate, amending the 2010 health care law to preserve conscience rights for religious institutions, health care providers, and small businesses who pay for health care coverage.

Currently, the bill has 190 cosponsors in the House. In the Senate, Senator Roy Blunt is advancing this same legislation, with nearly 40 cosponsors.

H.R. 1179 enjoys the endorsements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,

National Right to Life Committee, Americans United for Life, and other organizations. Numerous other organizations, including the Christian Medical Association and Family Research Council, have urged support of the bill.

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