

# ‘More Respect for Religious Freedom’ Needed After Failed Senate Vote to Curtail It

July 16, 2014

WASHINGTON—Today the U.S. Senate voted against considering S. 2578, a bill empowering the federal government to override the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and other federal conscience laws when it mandates including any “item or service” in health plans.

Writing “in strong opposition” to the bill earlier this week were Cardinal Seán O’Malley of Boston and Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, chairs respectively of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities and the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty. They wrote that S. 2578 “does not befit a nation committed to religious liberty. Indeed, if it were to pass, it would call that commitment into question. Nor does it show a genuine commitment to expanded health coverage, as it would pressure many Americans of faith to stop providing or purchasing health coverage altogether.”

A motion to take up this legislation was supported by 56 Senators but failed to achieve the 60 votes needed to proceed. Commenting on the vote, USCCB Director of Government Relations Jayd Henricks said: “While the outcome of today’s vote is a relief, it is sobering to think that more than half the members of the U.S. Senate, sworn to uphold the laws and Constitution of the United States, would vote for a bill whose purpose is to reduce the religious freedom of their fellow Americans. We need more respect for religious freedom in our nation, not less.”

Cardinal O’Malley and Archbishop Lori’s July 14 letter is available online: [www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/upload/07-14-14-S-2578-Cardinal-O-Malley-Archbishop-Lori-to-Senate.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/upload/07-14-14-S-2578-Cardinal-O-Malley-Archbishop-Lori-to-Senate.pdf). More information on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and conscience rights is available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/conscience-protection/upload/S-2578-Backgrounder.pdf> and by following #HandsOffRFRA.

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