

Network deserves credit for health care reform

Maureen Fiedler | Mar. 23, 2010 NCR Today

Network, along with the Catholic Health Association, can take real credit for health care reform. On Sunday, I had the opportunity to talk to Sr. Simone Campbell, the Executive Director of NETWORK. She is the author of the letter, signed by the leadership of American nuns, advocating a vote for health care reform legislation without the highly restrictive anti-abortion language (the original Stupak language) that the bishops wanted. Like the Catholic Health Association, these nuns believed that the anti-abortion provisions in the Senate version of the bill preserved the status quo (i.e., no federal funding for abortion), and took a courageous stand that disagreed publicly with the bishops.

Sr. Simone told me that she gathered the signatures in only 48 hours, and then hand-delivered the letters to offices on the Hill. In several places, she said, the response was gratitude and even relief, with expressions like "this is just what we need."

Last Friday, I talked to Sr. Catherine Pinkerton, also of Network, who -- in her mid-80s -- was supposed to have retired a few weeks ago. But health care was too important, so she was working the phones, calling House members, lobbying furiously for reform. I noted later that the House member she was trying to reach that day voted "yes" in the end.

I suspect others on the Network staff were working the health care issue just as hard.

Network has built a reputation of solid trust on the Hill for years. Its lobbyists are respected and believed. Sunday night, that long legacy of hard work and trust paid off big time for the American people.

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