

Proposed Congressional resolution gives 'deepest appreciation' for LCWR

Joshua J. McElwee | Jun. 26, 2012 NCR Today

In what seems to be the highest-profile response yet to the Vatican's sharp rebuke of the group representing the majority of U.S. women religious, sixty-two members of the U.S. House of Representatives have cosponsored a resolution expressing the "deepest appreciation" for the sisters' work.

Citing the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) -- the group which was the subject of the April rebuke from the Vatican -- by name, the sponsors of the resolution acknowledge the work of sisters in the U.S. in the fields of education, healthcare, and social justice ministry.

That work, reads the resolution, helps "make our nation stronger" and the sisters "deserve our deepest appreciation."

The measure, officially titled "Honoring Catholic sisters for their contributions to the United States," was introduced June 18 by Democratic Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, a Catholic who represents Connecticut's third district and is a member of the non-profit organization Catholic Democrats.

Among the reasons given in the resolution for Congress to support the sisters are that they:

- "were instrumental in building the Catholic Church in the United States;"
- "helped establish the nation's largest private school system, educating millions of young Americans;" and,
- "have answered Vatican II's call to seek 'justice in the world'" and "continue this vital mission today: teaching our children in schools, healing the sick in hospitals, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, administering major institutions, encouraging corporate responsibility, and advocating for public policies that honor human dignity."

The resolution also mentions the fact that, by the writers' count, "since 1980, 9 American sisters have been martyred while working for social justice and human rights overseas."

In an April 18 order to the LCWR, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ordered that the group revise its statues and programs and place itself under the authority of three bishops.

Statements from LCWR and Vatican officials since have seemed to indicate the two groups are at a standstill of sorts regarding the order. In a June 12 interview with *NCR* following a meeting in Rome on the matter, the head of the Vatican congregation, Cardinal William Levada, [warned of a possible 'dialogue of the deaf' between the group.](#) [1]

Days later, LCWR's president, Franciscan Sr. Pat Farrell, told *NCR* June 18 [she's "not sure" of the best way for her group to continue its conversations with Vatican officials](#) [2] as they both "need to get beneath the polarizations out of which we're speaking to one another."

Members of LCWR are expected to address the matter more deeply in their upcoming annual assembly, to be held in St. Louis in August.

Among the cosponsors of the Congressional resolution are a number of prominent Catholic representatives, including Marcy Kaptur of Ohio, Jackie Speier of California, Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, and Tim Bishop of New York.

The measure has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which is headed by Republican Congressman Darrell Issa of California and has most recently been in the news for voting to hold Attorney General Eric Holder in contempt of Congress for refusing to release documents related to the Fast and Furious gun-walking operation.

Following is the full text of the proposed Congressional resolution.

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