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UUA Celebrates Defeat of Proposal to Deny Health Care to Americans

March 1, 2012, Washington, DC - The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations commends the U.S. Senate for blocking an extreme proposal that would allow any employer or insurance plan, with or without religious affiliation, to refuse to cover any service based on undefined religious or moral objections. The proposal, initiated by Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO), failed this afternoon to reach the stage of a final vote on the Senate floor by narrow margin.

One of several federal-level attacks on reproductive justice for women, this legislation would have extended far beyond any other so-called ‘conscience clause’ measures, which had up to this point only proposed to effect religiously-affiliated organizations. These ‘conscience clauses’ are thinly-veiled attempts to legalize discrimination against particular groups or services; the Blunt amendment would have permitted any employer – from a fast food restaurant to a university – to discriminate against women and others by not providing insurance coverage for cancer screenings, domestic violence counseling, diabetes screenings, contraceptives, or other health care services. Undermining the basic notion of health insurance, the defeat of this measure is a positive start to the long legislative battle for women’s reproductive rights over the coming months.

Anchored in a strong historical commitment to reproductive justice, the UUA is working with many partners, including the National Council of Jewish Women, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Catholics for Choice, the National Women’s Law Center, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America, to defeat measures like the Blunt amendment. These interfaith and secular pro-choice advocates are working hard to mobilize the grassroots against these extreme measures which criminalize health care and erode women’s dignity and self-determination. Unitarian Universalists are encouraged to continue contacting their elected officials and community leaders in support of reproductive justice for all.