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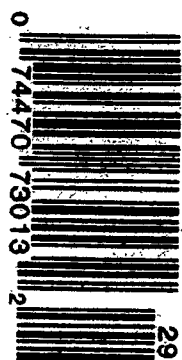
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DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NEW YORK ■ VOL. 105 NO. 42 ■ THURSDAY, July 28, 1994 ■ 75¢ ■ 24 PAGES/2 sections

## Universal health care threatened by abortion debate



**U**.S. Rep. John LaFalce (D-L), whose 29th District includes portions of Monroe County, advocates universal health coverage, but warned of a potential legislative roadblock ahead.

"If we're going to pass universal coverage, we need the votes of pro-life and pro-choice members, and if either takes a walk, the bill goes down," he stressed in a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier* from his Washington, D.C. office.

A pro-life proponent, LaFalce noted that he generally agrees with the U.S. bishops on such social issues as health-care reform and abortion. If so, he's one of the few members of Congress who will not be a hard sell for Patricia A. King, the U.S. Catholic Conference's policy adviser on health and welfare issues.

Instead of taking a stand that might please politicians on both sides of the ideological aisle, the USCC has staked out a position with something to turn off both sides, King noted in a phone interview from her Washington, D.C. office.

Much like many liberal politicians, the USCC supports universal coverage — a position seconded by the Diocese of Rochester in its latest statement on health-care reform, released in March of this year.

The statement was developed by the 22-member Diocesan Public Policy Committee, and was shaped, in part, by positions taken previously by the USCC and

the Catholic Health Association. The statement was also based on input provided by diocesan Catholics at a series of ten healthcare town meetings attended by more than 300 people throughout the diocese.

"(W)e will strongly support measures to ensure true universal access and rapid steps to improve the health-care of the poor and unserved," the statement read.

Indeed, Bishop Matthew H. Clark reiterated the church's call for universal coverage in a series of editorials distributed to various newspapers.

"Our concern for the poor and vulnerable who are on the margin of society, and our belief in the basic rights and responsibilities of the human person, lead us to advocate for comprehensive healthcare reform that assures universal access," the bishop wrote.

The diocesan statement came down on the side of a health system that ties the fate of the poor to that of the average person.

"We do not support a two-tiered health system since separate healthcare coverage for the poor usually results in poor healthcare," the statement asserted.

Yet, despite such rhetoric that is music to any liberal reformers' ears, like many conservative politicians, the USCC and the diocese oppose any inclusion of abortion in a basic health benefits package.

By  
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Staff writer

Continued on page 14