

# Two archbishops urge support of House resolution on assisted suicide

WASHINGTON (CNS) – Two U.S. archbishops urged support of a House concurrent resolution that calls for “comprehensive medical care” over suicide or assisted suicide for patients nearing the end of their lives.

“We must do what we can to uphold the dignity of life, cherish the lives of all human beings, and work to prevent all suicides,” said a joint Dec. 20 statement from Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development.

“Assisted suicide fractures the human family by targeting its most vulnerable members, including the elderly and persons with disabilities, suggesting that their lives are not worth living,” the two archbishops said.

The resolution, introduced Dec. 12 by Rep. J. Louis Correa, D-California, has 10 co-sponsors. It was referred to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

“We urge the U.S. Congress to do all it can to protect Americans from this cruel practice, and to ensure those who are ill, disabled, or facing the end of life receive comprehensive medical and palliative care instead of a facilitated suicide,” Archbishops Naumann and Coakley said.

“There is no constitutional right to assisted suicide,” the resolution says. “The government has a legitimate interest in prohibiting assisted suicide, and ... such prohibitions rationally relate to ‘protecting the vulnerable from coercion’

and 'protecting disabled and terminally ill people from prejudice, negative and inaccurate stereotypes,' and 'societal indifference.'"

"The federal government should ensure that every person facing the end of their life has access to the best quality and comprehensive medical care, including palliative, in-home, or hospice care, tailored to their needs," it adds. "The federal government should not adopt or endorse policies or practices that support, encourage, or facilitate suicide or assisted suicide, whether by physicians or others."

The Pontifical Academy for Life hosted the World Innovation Summit for Health Dec. 11-12 in Rome. The day before the conference began, the academy's president, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, said end-of-life issues would be on the agenda.

Helping communities and countries take notice of this issue is key, Archbishop Paglia said, if they hope "to avoid that the growing number of elderly leads not just to a culture of disposal, but actual disposal, that is the culture of euthanasia."