



Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

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Cardinal O'Malley Welcomes Supreme Court Decision Affirming Freedom of Speech for Pro-Life Americans

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WASHINGTON—The U.S. Supreme Court upheld freedom of speech for pro-life Americans in a June 26 decision in the case of *McCullen v. Coakley*. The Court unanimously declared unconstitutional a Massachusetts law barring pro-life advocates from public sidewalks near abortion facilities. Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, issued the following statement.

“Today the Supreme Court found unconstitutional a Massachusetts law imposing criminal penalties on pro-life Americans who peacefully pray for and offer alternatives to pregnant women approaching abortion clinics. This discriminatory law barred these citizens from gathering on nearby public sidewalks, while exempting ‘clinic escorts’ trained to expedite women into the facility. Clearly this was an attack on pro-life Americans’ freedom of speech, and we welcome the Court’s decision to overturn the law.

“This now overturned legislation reflects an ominous trend in our society. Abortion supporters, having long denied that unborn children have a right to life, would deny that their fellow Americans who seek to protect the unborn have the same rights as other Americans – the right to freedom of speech and freedom of association; the right to participate in the public square and serve the vulnerable in accord with our moral convictions. Increasingly we see this trend evidenced at various levels of government. We are encouraged and pleased to know that with regard to this particular issue, our highest court has affirmed the American tradition of basic constitutional rights for all.”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops had joined with other religious groups in a “friend of the court” brief urging this result. The brief can be found online:

www.usccb.org/about/general-counsel/amicus-briefs/upload/cls-amicus-brief-filed.pdf

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