

**USCMA Resolution Supporting Access to Essential Medicines
2007 Annual Meeting
Austin, Texas**

Let it be resolved that:

USCMA members endorse the S. Res 241/H. Res 525 currently under consideration in the U.S. Congress that calls for a new direction in U.S. trade policy with respect to intellectual property rules that encourage both access to essential medicines and the innovation of new medical technologies to promote public health in developing countries.

Rationale:

We, USCMA members, many of whom are missionaries who have worked with sick and poor people in countries around the world, locate intellectual property rights within the broader framework of Catholic Social Teaching based on the common good, and believe these rights should be balanced with the needs of the poor.

Background: The World Trade Organization's 1995 Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) requires all member countries – including developing countries - to adopt U.S.-style patent and other intellectual property rules for all products, including pharmaceuticals. The 2001 Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health clarified that developing countries maintain substantial “flexibilities” under TRIPS, and that TRIPS should be interpreted in a fashion that supports the obligation to protect public health and promote access to medicines.

The United States has systematically violated the trade commitments it made in the Doha Declaration, undermining the ability of developing countries to promote access to medicines amongst their poor populations. The majority of the world's people cannot afford to purchase brand-name medicines; the introduction of much cheaper generics by using the WTO TRIPS flexibilities will help save lives. At the same time, new approaches to medical research and development are needed in order to spur innovation that will meet priority health needs. Senate Resolution 241/ House Resolution 525 aim to make the public health principles of innovation and access the governing feature of U.S. trade, not as a balancing act, but in ways that affirm and advance both goals.

Call for Action:

We urge Congress to pass this resolution, which will challenge the United States government's trade policy to:

1. Honor the commitments it made in the 2001 WTO Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.
2. Refrain from punishing or threatening trade partners from using TRIPS flexibilities to advance public health objectives.
3. Refrain from seeking intellectual property measures more stringent than those provided for in TRIPS.
4. Support new global norms for promoting medical research and development (R&D) that would address a needs-driven health agenda.

Additional Call for Specific Actions:

- As USCMA members, we are encouraged to use our resources of education, preaching and advocacy to urge our respective Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor S. Res 241 or H. Res 525.
- Write a letter, call or meet with your Representative and/or Senators (or their staff) and ask them to co-sponsor S. Res 241 / H. Res 525. Thank them if they have already co-sponsored the resolution.

Other Useful Resources and Links:

- Background materials on the Resolution are available at www.essentialaction.org/access/ or contact Sarah Rimmington, Essential Action's Access to Medicines Project, Washington, D.C. (email) rrimmington@essentialinformation.org (Tel) 202-422-2687.
- Letter to U.S. Trade Representative on Free Trade Agreement with the Andean Nations of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru from Bishop Thomas Wenski, November 28, 2005, available at www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/tradeind.shtml
- Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance - a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on global trade and HIV and AIDS. Geneva, Switzerland (Tel) +44-1524-727-651 (Web) www.e-alliance.ch