

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
Statement on VA Abortion Policy
1 March 2024



The Department of Veterans Affairs has finalized an interim rule that permits abortion counseling and abortive procedures in VA Medical Centers through all nine months of pregnancy. The notion that killing an unborn child can somehow be considered “medical or surgical care” certainly violates the dignity of the human person and suggests that some lives are more important than others. I deplore this decision that once more removes the right to life for the defenseless and inflicts untold physical and psychological trauma on mothers.

In April 2023, this Archdiocese, along with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), raised multiple objections to the rule in its interim form.¹ This Archdiocese and the USCCB particularly observed that the VA Secretary exceeded his authority in expanding the definition of “medical or surgical care” to include abortion, especially because the section 106 of Veterans Health Care Act specifically *limits* abortion.² In its comments with the final rule, the Department of Veterans Affairs agreed that the Secretary has absolutely no authority to allow for abortion within section 106 of Veterans Health Care Act, writing, the Act “barred the provision of abortion.”³ However, nonsensically, the Department claims that other statutes, which never mention abortion, create in their silence, a right to abortion, even though abortion is specifically prohibited within the larger statutory scheme for VA Health Care. The VA notes that including “abortion” is a “general versus specific canon of statutory construction.” This bald rhetoric ignores logic and basic tenets of statutory construction, and belies a relentless ideological pursuit of abortion even when it is plainly contrary to law.

¹ [2022.9.21.comments.VA .regs .final .pdf \(usccb.org\)](https://www.usccb.org/media/2022-9-21-comments-VA-reggs-final-pdf-usccb-org).

² Section 106 states that “In furnishing hospital care and medical services under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may provide to women the following health care services: ... (3) General reproductive health care, including the management of menopause, *but not including under this section ... abortions ...* except for such care relating to a pregnancy that is complicated or in which the risks of complication are increased by a service-connected condition....” (Emphasis added.)

³ [Federal Register :: Reproductive Health Services](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/04/27/2023-08441/reproductive-health-services) see Section B(2) Specific Assertions of Lack of Authority or Conflicting Authority.

The VA's decision is at odds with the notion that the military protects the innocent. Now, the Department which was established to care for Veterans of the United States Armed Forces through service-related disabilities and retirement, affirms its decision to join what Pope Francis called "hit men" – those who choose "to do away with a human life to solve a problem."

It is expected that the Department of Veterans Affairs will at least respect the conscience rights of medical personnel, staff, and other employees and permit them to abstain from any involvement in immoral procedures.