

Ivanka Trump Has Become a Flashpoint for Hostility Against Her Father

Ivanka Trump is more than just the First Daughter. As a key adviser as well as the wife of Jared Kushner, the president's Jewish son-in-law and point man on a host of issues, she has become a major political figure. More than that, as the country's most famous convert to Orthodox Judaism she is a flash point for the hostility most of her co-religionists harbor for her father.

Along with that notoriety comes the drawbacks of fame. Nothing she does, including her level of Shabbat observance and Instagram posts about the presidential grandchildren, is off-limits for cheap shots by the media and members of the anti-Trump "resistance." But more importantly, liberals are also using her status as the most prominent woman inside the Trump camp as a club with which to beat her and other Republicans.

This was highlighted lately as Jewish women's groups including Hadassah, the National Council of Jewish Women, Jewish Women International as well as Reform and Conservative Jewish women's organizations sent her letter about the ObamaCare contraception mandate. It's part of an effort to bludgeon or shame her into getting her father to break a campaign promise. But it is particularly ill considered that the organized Jewish world should be seeking to leverage her faith as a way to undermine efforts to protect religious freedom.

The issue concerns the decision by the president to set in motion a change in the rules by which the federal government enforced compliance with the Affordable Care Act. While Trump is hoping that Congressional Republicans will pass a repeal and replace bill for ObamaCare, it's not clear when or if

he'll get his way so until that legislative catastrophe is sorted out, he wants to create room for religious groups and individuals to opt out of the contraception mandate.

The controversy over the mandate was a key element of the battle over ObamaCare. Conservative Christians fought to allow those who objected to being made to pay for a service that violated their religious beliefs the right to opt out of the mandate. That led to a long struggle that was only partially resolved when conservatives won a signal victory in the U.S. Supreme Court in the Hobby Lobby case. In that case, the owners of the arts and crafts chain stores successfully fended off the government's effort to make them pay for both contraception coverage and abortion-inducing drugs for their employees despite their faith-based opposition to them. But while Hobby Lobby and the Catholic Little Sisters of the Poor won their fight, others with similar principles continue to be under pressure to conform.

For liberals, the issue revolves around the right to contraception and they have framed their disagreement as one in which they are defending women against those who wish to deny them essential care and services. That the right to free contraception only dates back to ObamaCare's 2010 passage is beside the point. What is relevant is that this involves the balancing of two concerns.

One doesn't have to oppose or wish to limit access to contraception or abortion to understand that forcing those who do object on religious grounds to be morally complicit in their use abridges their right to religious freedom. You may believe the cause of expanding access should take precedence over other concerns. But religious freedom means enabling Americans to live a religious life in the public square not just in private. Compelling people to violate their beliefs even to advance what you believe to be a good cause is not consistent with the free exercise of religion guaranteed by the First Amendment.

So, whether you regard Ivanka as a role model or a false front for a president you consider unfit for office, the willingness of Jewish groups to use her religion or her role as the most influential woman in the White House against her on this issue is unfortunate. However much good you believe may come from forcing everyone to pay for drugs or contraception that doesn't take precedence over what we have always rightly termed our first freedom.

No one ought to understand that better than the Jewish community which has always prided itself on defending the rights of other faiths as well as our own. We know that if anyone's religious liberty is threatened, it imperils the rights of all. Those Jews who let their views about the culture wars against conservative Christians to take precedence over that great truth are making a mistake that equals any blunder made by any of the Trumps. {eo}

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