

These 14 Senators Just Filed an Epic Legislative Response to Obama's Infringement on Religious Liberty

If a newly introduced bill becomes law, faithful Christian business owners and organizations would not have to give their employees abortion-inducing drugs, or other insurance coverage that violates their deeply held beliefs. Yesterday Senator James Lankford, R-OK, and 13 other senators introduced the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, a bill that would ensure that organizations, private businesses, institutions of higher education, health care providers, and insurance companies are not forced to sponsor insurance coverage that violates their religious or moral beliefs. "Our nation is divided on various issues, but the fabric of America is built on the First Amendment rights of free speech and the free exercise of religion. This should be something we all agree on," said Lankford, who is the lead sponsor. "It is possible for people with opposing views to live together in peace but we all must respect our different beliefs. The federal government should respect freedom and conscience rights for everyone; this bill would assure that happens." Specifically, the Health Care Conscience Rights Act provides an exemption from the burdensome ObamaCare Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate, and ensures that individuals and health care providers are not forced into choosing between violating their conscience or paying a prohibitive fine that could close their businesses. The bill would prohibit any action by the federal government and any state or local government receiving federal financial assistance to subject a health professional, a hospital, a provider-sponsored organization, a health maintenance organization, an accountable care organization, a health

insurance plan, or any other kind of health care facility, organization, or plan to discriminate on the basis that the entity refuses to participate in abortion-related activities. The bill creates a cause of action for any violation of the abortion discrimination prohibition. It gives federal courts jurisdiction to prevent and redress actual or threatened violations of such prohibition by issuing any form of legal or equitable relief, including injunctions and orders preventing the disbursement of all or a portion of federal financial assistance until the prohibited conduct has ceased. Original Senate co-sponsors include: Senators Jim Inhofe, R-OK; John McCain, R-AZ; Rob Portman, R-OH; Bill Cassidy, R-LA; Roy Blunt, R-MO; Ted Cruz, R-TX; John Boozman, R-AR; Bob Corker, R-TN; Dan Coats, R-IN; Steve Daines, R-MT; Ben Sasse, R-NE; Johnny Isakson, R-GA; and Jerry Moran, R-KS. "The freedom of religion is the first sentence in the first line of the first amendment, and it's one that Americans have enjoyed for more than 220 years," said Blunt. "I have long been involved in protecting this constitutional right. Although the Supreme Court's ruling in *Hobby Lobby v. Burwell* was an important victory, we need to ensure that our health care system respects religious freedom in the law – not just in court precedent. I'm pleased to cosponsor the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, and I'll continue fighting to protect the fundamental freedoms that make America great." "Our nation was founded on the value that citizens should be able to practice their faith peacefully and freely. As such, we should be preserving that freedom that allows Americans to hold on to their sincerely held beliefs in all aspects of their lives," said Inhofe. "The Health Care Conscience Rights Act gives health care professionals, religious organizations, higher education institutions and insurance companies the freedom to live their faith in the workplace. Our government should not force Americans to take actions in violation of their conscience." "Freedom of conscience is the cornerstone of our First Amendment freedoms and, no matter how we view some of society's most important debates, we should be able to agree

that the federal government should respect that freedom for everyone,” said Sasse. “I know my faith does not begin and end at the doors of our church and living the principles of what I believe is a key part of my faith,” said Daines. “Every American should be free to live and work in accordance with their religious beliefs without fear of any government restrictions. I am proud to help introduce the Health Care Conscience Rights Act, which will uphold our Constitutional right to religious freedom and uphold our moral calling to practice life-affirming health care.” “The protection of religious liberty means that all people of all faiths have the right to exercise their faith within the bounds of our justice system,” said Coats. “Requiring faith-based institutions and businesses to betray the fundamental tenets of their beliefs is wrong and contrary to the First Amendment to our Constitution. Our legislation preserves the rights of conscience for all Americans.” “Families and businesses should not be coerced by the Obama administration into supporting abortion-related activities they don’t agree with,” said Cassidy. “The First Amendment must be protected.” “There is a reason why the first protection in the Bill of Rights was the right to religious freedom,” said Cruz. “Americans have a right to live and work in accordance to their conscience and should not be forced to surrender their religious beliefs once they open a business or provide services to others.” “One of the cornerstones of our great nation is the protection of religious freedom for all,” said Boozman. “Unfortunately, ObamaCare erodes this constitutionally-enshrined protection for so many Americans by forcing them to support actions that run counter to their religious beliefs. Our bill is an effort to restore those protections and ensure the rights of conscience are preserved for all Americans.” Rep. Diane Black (R-TN) has introduced a companion bill in the House. Former Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) introduced the bill in the Senate during the last Congress.