

43 Catholic Groups File Suit Against Obamacare

The battle is on. The Catholic Church has thrown down the gauntlet in the front lawn of the White House.

The Archdiocese of New York, the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., the University of Notre Dame—43 Catholic dioceses and organizations nationwide in total—filed a dozen federal lawsuits against the Obama administration for violating their constitutionally guaranteed **freedom of religion**.

The Catholic dioceses and businesses are suing the Obama administration over new regulations that would force health-care plans in the United States to cover sterilizations and abortion drugs.

“By suing the Obama administration, they are sending a message that the freedom of religion guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution is essential to our liberties and that they will fight to preserve it,” says Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council. “The Constitution guarantees more than simply freedom of worship. It also protects the right to live out one’s religious beliefs in accordance with their faith.”

As Perkins sees it, regardless of their views on abortion or contraception, Americans of all faiths oppose forcing religious organizations to pay for such services. The Obama administration, through its Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), he argues, would do just that by forcing religious organizations to cover abortifacients and contraceptives in their health-care plans.

Alan Sears, Alliance Defense Fund president and CEO, also applauded the lawsuits. He says the lawsuits are about **religious freedom** and freedom of conscience, not about

contraception, just as the archdioceses themselves are saying.

"These new cases are about the very right to determine what is 'religious' and what faith-based beliefs may be followed in life," Sears says. "They join the growing list of evangelical, protestant and Catholic religious organizations and employers who are taking a stand in objecting to the government when it forces any religious institution or individual to provide or fund morally repugnant services."

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, says his group has tried negotiation with the Obama administration and legislation with the Congress—and will keep at it. But, he adds, there's still no fix.

"Time is running out, and our valuable ministries and fundamental rights hang in the balance, so we have to resort to the courts now. Though the Conference is not a party to the lawsuits, we applaud this courageous action by so many individual dioceses, charities, hospitals and schools across the nation, in coordination with the law firm of Jones Day," Dolan says. "It is also a compelling display of the unity of the church in defense of **religious liberty**. It's also a great show of the diversity of the church's ministries that serve the common good and that are jeopardized by the mandate—ministries to the poor, the sick, and the uneducated, to people of any faith or no faith at all."

Finally, Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, notes that these new actions mean there are now 23 lawsuits filed against this assault on religious freedom. Pavone's organization was the fourth to file suit against the mandate in February.

"When there are multiple federal lawsuits on the same issue in different parts of the country, this can create the potential kind of conflict that the Supreme Court may be more likely to

resolve,” Pavone says.

Besides suing Kathleen Sebelius and the HHS, Father Pavone and Priests for Life are helping organize rallies nationwide to stand up for religious freedom on Friday, June 8. The Priests for Life team is organizing the rally in New York City.

“The fact that the New York Archdiocese is now part of the legal assault on this mandate will, I am sure, create renewed interest and participation in our June 8 rally,” he says. “We invite all to take part.”