

Church and State Lines Blurred in HHS Religious Freedom Assault

The contraception mandate is officially in effect. Better known as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate, it requires all health insurance plans to cover contraceptives, abortion-causing drugs including Plan B and Ella, and sterilization.

Despite religious beliefs against such practices, organizations that refuse to comply could be fined as much as \$100 per day per employee. There is a safe haven, so to speak, but that only gives groups a one-year grace period before they have to start violating their conscience.

“President Obama has made clear, in his legislation, public remarks and his lawsuits, that he believes religion and conscience should take a back seat to his **pro-abortion**, -sterilization and -contraception agenda,” says Tom McClusky, senior vice president of Family Research Council Action. “The president might think that violating one’s conscience ‘is not a big deal’ but to many Americans it is impossible. If the courts or Congress will not address this grave injustice, civil disobedience will be inevitable.”

Paul E. Rondeau, executive director of American Life League, says the president’s HHS Mandate redefines and marginalizes **religious freedom** in favor of government ideology.

“History tragically teaches us that if our government can abolish one constitutional right, then all constitutional rights are put in jeopardy,” Rondeau says. “This path sets a dangerous and foolish precedent that **First Amendment** rights such as freedom of speech, association, freedom of the press, and the rights to assemble and petition the government may be

just as easily curtailed in the future. We call on all citizens to tell their elected representatives that this erosion of rights must not stand.”

As a result of this initial implementation of the HHS Mandate, the relationship between church and State is critically changed, according to Jeanne Monahan, director of the Family Research Council’s Center for Human Dignity.

“Americans can no longer follow their consciences or religious dictates on issues as critical as abortion-inducing drugs,” Monahan says. “Organizations such as Wheaton College, or businesses such as Weingartz Supply of Ann Arbor, Michigan will be forced to violate their consciences. On this sad day Americans have no ‘choice’ in this matter.”

Ken Klukowski, J.D., director of FRC’s Center for Religious Liberty, says religious liberty goes far beyond merely the ‘freedom of worship’—an alarmingly narrow term the Obama administration has adopted—to include peacefully living out your faith in every area of life. For private business owners, that includes their right to showcase their faith through their business policies.

“The Constitution’s separation of powers exists for a reason,” Klukowski said. “The lawfulness of this regulation ultimately will be decided by the courts, where approximately 50 suits related to the HHS mandate currently wait to be heard.”