

Final Conscience Rule Will Protect People, Orgs From Providing Abortions

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a final conscience rule that protects health care individuals and entities from providing and participating in services such as abortion, sterilization or assisted suicide procedures that violate their religious and moral beliefs.

President Donald Trump made the announcement Thursday during a speech in the White House Rose Garden to mark the National Day of Prayer.

The conscience rule will be effective 60 days from its final publication and enforced by the agency's Office of Civil Rights. According to the HHS, the rule requires hospitals, universities, clinics and other institutions that receive funding from federal programs such as Medicare and Medicaid to certify that they comply with 25 laws passed by Congress that protect conscience rights in health care. Those laws allow health providers and entities to opt out of providing, participating in, paying for or referring for health care services about which they have personal or religious objections.

The final rule fulfills President Trump's promise to promote and protect the fundamental and unalienable rights of conscience and religious liberty, a promise he made when he signed an executive order in May 2017 protecting religious liberty. In October 2017, the Department of Justice issued guidance encouraging other Departments, including HHS, to implement and enforce all relevant religious freedom laws. As a result, in January 2018, following the launch of its new Conscience and Religious Freedom Division, HHS announced the

proposed conscience rule.

“I commend President Trump and the administration for protecting the sanctity of human life, the rights of conscience and religious freedom today on the National Day of Prayer,” said Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel. “This rule ensures that health care entities and professionals will not be bullied out of the health care field because they decline to violate their conscience by taking a human life,” said Staver.