

Obamacare Mandates Cripple Religious Freedom, Brief Says

Obamacare's employer mandate has become the "bludgeon" with which the government feels empowered to cripple the consciences of religious employers. That's the argument of a friend-of-the-court brief that Alliance Defending Freedom, Americans United for Life, and several state family policy councils filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit Thursday.

The employer mandate forces religious employers to provide health insurance coverage for their employees under the penalty of crippling fines. The brief supports a challenge to that mandate in *Liberty University v. Geithner* and concludes that the Obama administration's related **abortion-pill mandate** "draws all of its compulsive power from the employer mandate ... and is but a symptom of the illness that is the employer mandate's broad grant of power to HHS."

"Americans, including those who create and provide jobs, should be free to live according to their faith rather than be forced into surrendering their consciences," said Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Casey Mattox. "**Obamacare** demands that Americans choose between two poison pills: either desert your faith to comply with the government, or resist and be punished. The Obama administration's attacks on faith and employers prove that it doesn't respect either one."

Joining the brief with Alliance Defending Freedom and AUL are the Virginia Family Foundation, West Virginia Family Policy Council, Maryland Family Alliance, North Carolina Family Policy Council, and Palmetto Family Council, all of which are in states that will be directly affected by the 4th Circuit's decision.

The brief explains that the employer mandate “imposes punitive fines on employers, including religious employers, who fail to meet its demands. Its coupling with the broad grant of authority to HHS to order coverage of services that contravene the religious conscience of thousands of religious employers has resulted in an unprecedented attack on religious liberty.

“Just as [Liberty University] feared,” the brief continues, “the employer mandate has become the bludgeon with which the government is empowered to violate religious employers’ conscience. So long as HHS remains empowered to attack religious exercise and unencumbered by any conviction that religious employers, particularly for-profit employers, have any free exercise rights at all, these violations of **religious freedom** will continue.”

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys and allied attorneys are litigating 10 lawsuits specifically against the abortion-pill mandate. The lawsuits represent a large cross section of Protestants and Catholics who object to the mandate, which forces employers, regardless of their religious or moral convictions, to provide insurance coverage for abortion-inducing drugs and devices, sterilization and contraception under threat of heavy penalties.