

Pro-Life Advocates Petition Sebelius on Contraception Mandate

Pro-life voices are rising to a heated fervor. Some 70,000 Americans have gone on record to say that they don't want to be forced to choose between obeying the law and obeying the convictions of their faith.

These Americans signed on to a petition by the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) calling on Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to change the mandate and "accommodation" on contraceptives to protect **freedom of religion** and the conscience rights of Americans.

The HHS mandate requires religious institutions, such as religious schools and hospitals, to include **abortion-inducing drugs**, sterilization and **contraception** in their insurance policies for employees. The "accommodation" that was then issued after public outcry opposing the mandate is, according to the ACLJ, "a smoke and mirrors game" that does nothing to remove the burden on religious exercise imposed by the contraception mandate.

"These regulations clearly violate **religious liberty** and the conscience rights of millions of Americans. The fact is the mandate and the compromise are not about health care," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the ACLJ.

"It's the ultimate in government intrusion, representing a significant threat to religious organizations. Our legal analysis is clear: This is not only bad policy; it is **unconstitutional** as well. We're calling on Secretary Sebelius to immediately revise the regulations to conform with the constitutional protections afforded to all Americans."

The ACLJ's legal analysis explains why the mandate violates the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause as well as the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). In the document, the ACLJ urges Secretary Sebelius to take immediate corrective action:

"Whether mandating that religious employers or individuals violate their conscience by directly paying for contraceptives, or by contributing to a health insurance plan that is mandated to provide contraceptives, the comprehensive guidelines violate the **First Amendment**, and RFRA. The HHS should revise the comprehensive guidelines and remove the requirement that all insurance companies make contraceptives an obligatory part of every insurance package."