

Pro-Life Groups: Obama's Contraception Concession Not Enough

On Friday, the Obama administration offered a compromise on its controversial new **health care rules** that would allow religious employers to exclude contraceptives from health insurance for their employees, but would still guarantee those employees access to free coverage for birth control. The proposed rules, published in the Federal Register, are open for public comment through April 8.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also issued a statement, calling the concession "an accommodation" that would allow employees and students of religiously affiliated hospitals, universities and charities the option to enroll in separate contraceptive coverage plans without co-pays and without cost to the employer. Self-insured employers would provide notice to a third-party administrator that would then work with an insurer to arrange no-cost contraceptive coverage through separate individual health insurance policies, the HHS said.

The announcement has elicited strong and immediate responses from groups and individuals who believe the "accommodation" falls short of protecting religious liberty for all Americans.

"The Obama administration's revision to the **HHS contraceptive mandate** fails completely in protecting religious freedom for all Americans. This narrow policy revision would only protect a small segment of organizations purchasing health care and would still leave scores of groups and individuals at risk in having their religious freedoms and beliefs trampled and crushed," says Rev. Patrick J. Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition.

As he sees it, the announcement continues to show that this administration is clueless when it comes to understanding the **First Amendment** with respect to religious freedom for all Americans and ensuring that everyone is protected from having their core beliefs and conscience trampled by the government.

“The Obama administration continues it’s disrespect of the First Amendment and religious freedom by saying it only applies to certain groups and organizations,” Mahoney says. “Our Founding Fathers understood that religious liberty and free speech should extend to everyone, not just certain groups deemed acceptable by the president and his administration.”

Fr. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, says the HHS is giving the public an opportunity to provide its feedback to the proposed rules. I first of all want to urge the public to take advantage of this opportunity.

“Moreover, we at Priests for Life remind the Administration that religious liberty does not just belong to religious groups and individuals; it belongs to all Americans,” Pavone says. “Objections to contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs aren’t based just on dogmas and Bibles, but on adverse health consequences and the fact that human beings, no matter how small, should not be killed. We see only one acceptable change regarding the mandate: rescind it completely.”

According to Paul E. Rondeau, executive director of American Life League, if this president is a so-called constitutional scholar—as his supporters in the media portray him—then his law school should be embarrassed.

“In 80 pages of legalese and gobbledygook, this administration fails to recognize the constitutionally protected freedom of conscience that all Americans—not just religious organizations as defined by the IRS—are guaranteed in their personal lives and in the workplace,” Rondeau says. “The tragic lessons of history teach us that when one right can be infringed, all

rights are at risk. The HHS mandates are losing in court. It is time for this administration to submit itself to the U.S. Constitution, which it has sworn to uphold, and quit trying to hold the country's conscience hostage to its own agenda."

And Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Legal Counsel Matt Bowman, in a statement regarding the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit's preliminary injunction Friday that blocks enforcement of the Obama administration's abortion pill mandate against a Minnesota family-run business in *Annex Medical v. Sebelius*, argues that Americans have the God-given freedom to live and do business according to their faith.

"Honoring God is not just important within the four walls of a church; it is important every day, in all areas of life, including in our work. Freedom is not the government's to give and take away when it pleases," he says. "The court did the right thing in issuing its order, and we are confident that this unconstitutional mandate's days are numbered."