

Washington Pharmacists Can't Be Forced to Sell Plan B

Call it a victory for **religious conscience**. And with all the recent controversy over age requirements for Plan B day-after pills and contraception mandates in President Obama's healthcare push, it's a welcome one.

A federal court in Washington state ruled Wednesday that the state board of pharmacy cannot force pharmacists to stock drugs that risk taking human life if the pharmacists have a religious, moral or ethical objection. That includes Plan B.

The court determined that the pharmacists should be allowed to do what they have sought from the beginning, which is to refer patients seeking such drugs to other pharmacies.

"Americans should be able to rely on health-care providers who have a conscience. The court's decision is a ringing affirmation that conscience and good health care are not only compatible, but inseparable," said Alliance Defense Fund senior counsel Steven Aden. "Allowing pharmacists to exercise their consciences in this way serves both the patients and the pharmacists."

In its opinion, the court wrote, "The Board of Pharmacy's 2007 rules are not neutral, and they are not generally applicable. They were designed instead to force religious objectors to dispense Plan B, and they sought to do so despite the fact that refusals to deliver for all sorts of secular reasons were permitted. The rules are **unconstitutional** as applied to Plaintiffs."

Kristen Waggoner, one of nearly 2,100 attorneys in the ADF alliance, says patients are the biggest winners in this decision.

“Customers will receive prescribed drugs in the most efficient manner possible while at the same time respecting the conscience rights of pharmacists, who should never be forced to participate in **destroying human life** just to be able to preserve their professional licenses,” she says.