



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 14, 2012

Catholic Leaders Vow to Stand Against Contraception Mandate, Same-sex Marriage

As President Obama prepares for his second term, he will face at least one formidable foe in his campaign against Judeo-Christian values. Following the election, Catholic bishops around the nation made it clear that on at least two fronts they will stand firm against the government: the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) contraception mandate, which requires employers — including Christian businesses and organizations — to provide health insurance that includes free sterilization and abortion-causing birth control pills; and the legalization of same-sex marriage.



New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, head of the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#), said that while Catholic leaders are willing to work toward a resolution of the the Church's conflict with the federal government over the mandate, they would in no way compromise on issues vital to the faith of Catholics. "The only thing we're certainly not prepared to do is give in," Dolan told reporters at a November 12 bishops meeting. "We're not violating our consciences. I would say no door is closed except for the door to capitulation."

So far scores of religious colleges and non-profits, a majority of them Catholic, have sued to stop the implementation of the mandate, and an increasing number of Christian-owned private businesses are joining the suits, paying heed to the counsel of church leaders nationwide who advise that Christian doctrine and teaching prevent believers from following the mandate.

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, who leads the bishops' ad hoc religious freedom committee, told the [Catholic News Agency](#) that with the election behind the nation, the HHS mandate is "what we actually concretely have to deal with now. And as it stands, certainly we would not be able to live with it.... That's just not who we are, and we don't find it appropriate for any government to draw lines in our mission where we don't draw them."

Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, who leads the U.S. Catholic Bishops' marriage defense subcommittee, expressed his disappointment over the outcome of marriage initiatives in Minnesota, Maine, Maryland, and Washington state, telling reporters at the bishops meeting it was unfortunate that "a lot of our people view these issues politically, rather than through the lens of the Gospel."

Cordileone said that the failure to defend marriage at the polls is "a symptom of a much larger problem" — that people do not understand the true meaning of the timeless institution. "Marriage is not a matter of two consenting adults simply coming together for the state to ratify their romantic relationship," he explained. "Rather, marriage is the only institution that unites a man and a woman to each other and to any children born of their union.... It's child-centered, and its meaning is written in



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our nature. It's either this, or it's nothing at all."

Following the defeat of the Minnesota Marriage Amendment, which would have defined marriage in the state as only between a man and a woman, the [Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul](#), which had been a key leader for the amendment's passage, issued a statement saying that the defeat would not deter the diocese in its mission "to serve this community and the whole state in pursuit of the common good." The diocese said that it would continue to emphasize that "the good of society is best served by maintaining the traditional understanding of marriage as a union between one man and one woman. This proposition finds its intelligibility in the order of reason and in the testimony of the Bible."

James Conley, Bishop-elect of the diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, reacted more boldly, declaring with regards to the contraception mandate that "the Catholic Church is not going to back down. We are never going to compromise our principles. We will defy it and face the consequences."

The Obama Administration has tried to manipulate church groups and religious organizations into accepting the mandate, lamely offering to make insurance companies foot the bill for the "free" contraception rather than religious groups. HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius insisted that such a compromise "strikes the appropriate balance between respecting religious freedom and increasing access to important preventive services."

But religious leaders and their legal advocates have pointed out that Obama's supposedly magnanimous proposal amounts to a distinction without a difference, since the insurance companies would still charge for the contraceptives they pay for. "Insurance companies have said there is no free lunch," said Emily Hardman of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. Religious groups would still "end up paying for it, so it's a shell game," she added.

Earlier this year the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops initiated a two-week campaign for Catholic churches entitled [Fortnight for Freedom](#), during which they published a document, "[Our First, Most Cherished Liberty](#)," emphasizing that the Church would not back down from its opposition to the contraception mandate. "It is a sobering thing to contemplate our government enacting an unjust law," the bishops said. "An unjust law cannot be obeyed. In the face of an unjust law, an accommodation is not to be sought, especially by resorting to equivocal words and deceptive practices."

Continued the Catholic leaders: "If we face today the prospect of unjust laws, then Catholics in America, in solidarity with our fellow citizens, must have the courage not to obey them. No American desires this. No Catholic welcomes it. But if it should fall upon us, we must discharge it as a duty of citizenship and an obligation of faith."

In related news, the online [Huffington Post](#) reported that some secular groups are demanding that the IRS investigate whether Catholic bishops and evangelical groups like the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) violated their groups' tax-exempt boundaries by advising Christians to vote with biblical values in mind.

In a complaint to the IRS, a group calling itself Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington accused Catholic bishops of "abusing their positions to advocate against the election of President Barack Obama" by emphasizing the need for Catholics to vote based on their faith. Huffington Post noted that the group's director, Melanie Sloan, "said some bishops went too far by saying a vote for Democrats would mean going to hell."

Similarly, the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation filed a complaint against both the Wisconsin Catholic Bishops and the North Carolina-based BGEA, which took out an ad in papers like the



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Wall Street Journal and *USA Today* encouraging readers to vote for candidates who supported “biblical values.” Reported the Huffington Post: “The ads, signed by Graham, asked voters to back candidates who support ‘the biblical definition of marriage between a man and woman’ and who protect ‘the sanctity of life,’ an apparent reference to the group’s opposition to abortion.”

Officials for the BGEA said that it did nothing to violate IRS rules, since the ads did not endorse a particular candidate or party.

However, as [The New American](#) reported, on October 7 a “small army” of several hundred pastors across America intentionally crossed the line, defying the IRS by boldly taking to their pulpits “to preach sermons focused on a specific candidate, encouraging parishioners to show their support for that candidate at the polls.” The sermons were then recorded and sent to the IRS in hopes that the federal tax agency would respond by fining a church or taking away its tax-exempt status.

The goal, said Erik Stanley of the Alliance Defense Fund, which organized the effort, was to force the IRS’ hand so that its rule prohibiting churches and other tax-exempt entities from endorsing candidates could be challenged before the U.S. Supreme Court. “We’re hoping the IRS will respond by doing what they have threatened,” Stanley told [Fox News](#). “We have to wait for it to be applied to a particular church or pastor so that we can challenge it in court. We don’t think it’s going to take long for a judge to strike this down as unconstitutional.”

Stanley said that while the IRS issues abundant threats against churches for supposed violations of its tax rules, it has seldom followed through on prosecution because IRS bureaucrats are worried about the legal challenge that would almost certainly result. “It is blatantly unconstitutional,” Stanley told Fox News. “They just prefer to put out these vague statements and regulations and enforce it through a system of intimidation....”

The New American noted that to date none of the churches participating in the ADF’s “Pulpit Freedom Sunday” over the past years “have had their tax exemption revoked, nor have any received penalties from the IRS for what was said during their sermons.”

Photo of Cardinal Timothy Dolan speaking at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore Nov. 12: AP Images



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