



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 26, 2012

Tens of Thousands Nationwide Rally Against Obama Mandate

Organized by the Chicago-based [Pro-Life Action League](#), the [Nationwide Rally for Religious Freedom](#) brought together a broad range individuals and groups to speak out against the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) rule requiring religious institutions to provide employees with free birth control — including contraceptives that cause abortion — through their insurance coverage.



Rally director Eric Scheidler said that attendance ranged from fewer than one hundred participants in some smaller communities such as Pierre, South Dakota (55) and Kenai, Alaska (24), to a high of 2,500 in Chicago and an estimated 2,000 each in San Diego and Washington, DC. With around 106 rally sites tallied, Scheidler said easily over 54,000 individuals had attended a rally somewhere across the nation.

“Barack Obama’s HHS Mandate has awoken a sleeping giant,” he said of the surprising response. “I’ve never seen so much zeal.” He added that people “are deeply offended that President Obama’s contraception mandate casts fertility as a medical condition and pregnancy as a disease requiring free, mandated ‘preventive care.’ And they’re horrified that Obama’s phony ‘religious exemption’ excludes from the realm of religious ministry such things as feeding the hungry and caring for the sick.”

At the Washington, D.C. rally, Kristan Hawkins of the pro-life group [Students for Life of America](#), told attendees: “The new mandate ... violates our civil liberties and free exercise of religion by forcing every American, every public and private university student health care plan, and every U.S. employer, regardless of religion or conscience, to pay for abortion-causing drugs, like Ella, in health insurance plans.”

She noted that recently HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius audaciously declared during a congressional hearing that the mandate would reduce healthcare costs by reducing pregnancies. “Put bluntly,” she told the crowd, “this mandate ... will violate the very principles our nation was founded on — our freedom of religion and conscience.”

Father Peter West of [Human Life International](#) told attendees at a rally in Virginia, “When the government decides that the First Amendment of the Constitution must be obliterated so that some may receive free non-life saving drugs, our entire nation has a serious problem. This is one hundred percent about freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, and it affects every citizen, regardless of their religious beliefs or lack thereof.”



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At the Washington, D.C. rally, [Lila Rose of Live Action](#) derided the argument from pro-abortion groups like Planned Parenthood that standing against the mandate amounts to a “war” on women. “The very group that is manipulating, victimizing women — you talk about a war on women, that’s the war on women,” she said.

And conservative author Star Parker challenged that the church “has been called out to defend its position as a moral authority in this great country. The bright side of this government overreach [is that it] gives us reason to have a conversation that we should have had way back in the ‘60s.”

Jeff White, an organizer of the Los Angeles rally, told the [Christian Post](#) that the strong dissent by Christians over the mandate may well represent the beginnings of a new conservative grass-roots surge. “Those who are promoting the HHS mandate better watch themselves in this coming election because the church at large has the power to take this down,” he said. “A powerful movement has begun. I am sure that this is not the end of it. We are going to see more rallies that are a great way to educate the Church and inform the politicians.”

Eric Scheidler told the *Christian Post*: “What really excites me is that I am now in touch with activist leaders, some of them at their very first event or action that they’ve ever participated in. I have 150 activist leaders that I can work with and train in the best practices of activism.” He added that there is “a whole core of activists that we’ve raised up through this effort and I just can’t wait to put them all to work on behalf of the sanctity of life and the vigorous expression of religious faith in the public square.”

Dr. Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention’s [Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission](#) speculated that such efforts as the recent rally could have abortion proponents and other liberals running scared as the next election looms. “The thing that frightens our opponents the most is the specter of an evangelical-Catholic alliance, because they can count,” Land said during a recent radio program. “You take evangelicals and you take Roman Catholics and you are over 50 percent of the population of the country.”

While Democrats used to be able to count on a healthy percentage of Catholics voting their way, Bill Donahue of the [Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights](#) said that buffer has disappeared as President Obama continues to trample religious liberties. [Donahue cited a Pew Forum survey](#) showing that the “percent of Catholics who say the Administration is ‘unfriendly to religion’ has jumped in the past three years from 15 percent to 25 percent. Among white Catholics, the percent who say the Administration is ‘unfriendly’ has gone from 17 percent to 31 percent.”

Donahue noted that in addition to its contraceptive mandate, the Obama administration “recently denied funding to a Catholic social service agency that helps women and children merely because it is pro-life. Obama has appointed people such as Kathleen Sebelius to his cabinet, even though she has been at war with the Catholic Church for decades.”

[LifeSiteNews.com](#) recalled that in 2008 “78 percent of Jewish voters supported Obama, and 73 percent of evangelical Christians voted for John McCain. Meanwhile, 54 percent of Catholics cast their ballots for Obama.”

In the 2012 election, Donahue predicted, the Catholic vote will be “up for grabs,” and given the Obama administration’s non-stop assault on faith and traditional values, along with such positive efforts as the recent Rally for Religious Freedom, there could well be a mass migration of votes to candidates embracing a mandate for life and morality.

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