



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 13, 2012

Catholic Bishops Reject Obama's Contraception "Compromise"

America's Roman Catholic bishops have joined other Christian and conservative voices in rejecting President Obama's "compromise" on his earlier announced mandate requiring all employers — including most religious institutions — to include free contraception to women in their health insurance coverage.

As reported by [The New American](#), on February 10 the White House announced that it would supposedly accommodate religious institutions with objections to the mandate by relieving them of the requirement to provide or pay for contraception coverage. Instead, the [White House declared](#), the insurance companies that religious institutions use would be required to directly offer women the same coverage "free of charge."



Of course, those who objected to the President's decree in the first place pointed out that the compromise amounted to a "distinction without a difference," since the religious employer would still pay for the insurance coverage and so would still be footing the bill for the contraception coverage it morally opposes.

In their [statement](#) rejecting of the President's "compromise," the Catholic bishops recalled their original objection to the department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations "forcing private health plans — nationwide, by the stroke of a bureaucrat's pen — to cover sterilization and contraception, including drugs that may cause abortion." The bishops noted that all the other mandated "preventive services" under the HHS regulations address the prevention of disease, "and pregnancy is not a disease," they emphasized. "Moreover, forcing plans to cover abortifacients violates existing federal conscience laws."

In addition, the Catholic leaders noted, Obama's mandate would saddle many individuals and institutions with the burden of facilitating services that the Church considers immoral, among them "insurers forced to write policies including this coverage; employers and schools forced to sponsor and subsidize the coverage; and individual employees and students forced to pay premiums for the coverage."

While suggesting that the President's changes deserved "careful moral analysis," they nonetheless declared that "the lack of clear protection for key stakeholders — for self-insured religious employers; for religious and secular for-profit employers; for secular non-profit employers; for religious insurers; and for individuals — is unacceptable and must be corrected."



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They also noted that “where the employee and insurer agree to add the objectionable coverage, that coverage is still provided as a part of the objecting employer’s plan, financed in the same way as the rest of the coverage offered by the objecting employer. This, too, raises serious moral concerns.”

The measured statement by the bishops was more than offset by the angry comments from other Catholic leaders, who blasted the President for his political maneuvering on such an important issue. In a February 12 op-ed published by the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#), Philadelphia Archbishop Charles J. Chaput called the presidential mandate revision “insulting” and “dangerous” to the religious rights of Christians. “The HHS mandate, including its latest variant, is belligerent, unnecessary, and deeply offensive to the content of Catholic belief,” wrote the bishop. “Any such mandate would make it morally compromising for us to provide health care benefits to the staffing of our public service ministries.” He added that believers “cannot afford to be fooled — yet again — by evasive and misleading allusions to the administration’s alleged ‘flexibility’ on such issues. The HHS mandate needs to be rescinded.”

Bill Donohue of the [Catholic League](#) said that the President’s “compromise” merely “adds insult to injury. If the insurance plan of a Catholic institution must cover services it deems immoral, then such a healthcare plan is offensive, plain and simple.” Donohue explained how Obama’s “compromise” would work. “The Catholic League, for example, uses Christian Brothers as its insurance carrier,” he said. “So if a future employee of ours were to demand free abortion-inducing drugs, and she is allowed to request free drugs from Christian Brothers, then the rest of us would, in effect, be subsidizing her abortion. This is outrageous and will not stand judicial scrutiny.”

Dr. Samuel Gregg of the [Acton Institute](#) said that any idea of the contraception being “free” is an absurdity. “Someone has to pay,” he told [LifeSiteNews.com](#). “and it would be entirely reasonable — and very probable — for the insurance companies to simply charge religious institutions extra for their overall insurance policies in order to cover their not-so-free costs.”

He added that despite how the Obama administration tries to spin the “accommodation,” under the mandate Christian institutions would still end up assisting with something they consider sinful. “No amount of rationalization ... can disguise the fact that indirect payment for these services would fall into the areas of either what the Church calls formal cooperation in evil or direct material cooperation in evil,” he said.

Over 100 university presidents, professors, scholars, organizational heads, and activists also [signed a statement](#) declaring that the mandate is “a grave violation” of constitutionally protected religious freedoms. The statement, typed on the letterhead of Notre Dame University’s law school, pointed out that Obama’s “so-called ‘accommodation’ changes nothing of moral substance and fails to remove the assault on religious liberty and the rights of conscience which gave rise to the controversy. It is certainly no compromise.” Under what the President pretended was a “compromise,” the group said, “the government still coerces religious institutions and individuals to purchase insurance policies that include the very same services.”

The signers of the statement called the Obama administration “morally obtuse” for suggesting that their supposed concession was a “meaningful accommodation of religious liberty because the insurance company will be the one to inform the employee that she is entitled to the embryo-destroying ‘five day after pill’ pursuant to the insurance contract purchased by the religious employer.... The simple fact is that the Obama administration is compelling religious people and institutions who are employers to purchase a health insurance contract that provides abortion-inducing drugs, contraception, and sterilization. This is a grave violation of religious freedom and cannot stand.”



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And on February 9, the [Becket Fund](#), a Catholic legal advocacy group, announced that it was suing the Obama administration on behalf of the [Eternal Word Television Network](#) (EWTN) to have the contraception mandate stopped. “The federal government cannot force people to violate their religion like this,” said Mark Rienzi, senior counsel at the Becket Fund. “Mother Angelica founded EWTN to spread the teachings of the Catholic Church — not to betray them.”

Added EWTN’s president Michael Warsaw: “If we are willing to compromise our Catholic faith, we are selling the soul of the network.” He declared that the “mission of EWTN is not negotiable,” adding that perhaps the Obama administration had “missed the word ‘Eternal’ in the name” of the network. Betraying God’s love for every human person — even ones who are small and vulnerable — just isn’t something we’ll ever be able to adapt to.”

According to [LifeSiteNews.com](#), EWTN’s case is the third lawsuit brought by the Becket Fund challenging the Obama mandate. The legal group is also representing Belmont Abbey College, a Catholic institution in North Carolina, and Colorado Christian University, a non-denominational Christian university, in similar lawsuits.

Photo: Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)



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