



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 10, 2012

## Critics Call Obama's Contraception "Compromise" a "Distinction Without a Difference"

Christian and pro-family groups are blasting President Obama's "compromise" on his contraception mandate for religious groups as a meaningless distinction without a difference. On February 10, the White House announced that under a revision to the objectionable decree, religious institutions would not be required to offer free contraceptives to women employees as previously mandated. Instead, the requirement would be totally shifted to their insurance providers.



In what critics are calling a particularly transparent example of Orwellian double-speak, the White House explained that under the revised policy, women will still have "free preventive care that includes contraceptive services no matter where she works." Nonetheless, the policy "also ensures that if a woman works for religious employers with objections to providing contraceptive services as part of its health plan, the religious employer will not be required to provide, pay for or refer for contraception coverage." Instead, "her insurance company will be required to directly offer her contraceptive care free of charge."

Assured the White House of the supposed revision: "The new policy ensures that women can get contraception without paying a co-pay and fully accommodates important concerns raised by religious groups by ensuring that objecting non-profit religious employers will not have to provide contraceptive coverage or refer women to organizations that provide contraception."

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In a brief appearance at the White House, President Obama assured that under the revision "religious liberty will be protected and a law that requires free preventative care will not discriminate against women." Added the President: "I understand some folks in Washington want to treat this as another political wedge issue. But it shouldn't be. I certainly never saw it that way. This is an issue where people of good will on both sides of the debate have been sorting through some very complicated questions."



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Declared Obama: “No woman’s health should depend on who she is or where she works or how much money she makes.” Nonetheless, he conceded, “the principle of religious liberty” was endangered by his mandate. “As a citizen and as a Christian, I cherish this right.”

[Cecile Richards, head of Planned Parenthood](#), led off with the responses to the President’s announcement, expressing her satisfaction with the policy sleight-of-hand. “In the face of a misleading and outrageous assault on women’s health,” she averred, “the Obama administration has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring all women will have access to birth control coverage, with no costly co-pays, no additional hurdles, and no matter where they work.” She added that “we believe the compliance mechanism does not compromise a woman’s ability to access these critical birth control benefits.”

As reported by the [Associated Press](#), one lone religious group responded positively to the policy “change.” Sister Carol Keehan, president of the Catholic Health Association, said her organization was satisfied that the revision “responded to the issues we identified that needed to be fixed. We are pleased and grateful that the religious liberty and conscience protection needs of so many ministries that serve our country were appreciated enough that an early resolution of this issue was accomplished.”

But pro-life [Congressman Chris Smith](#) (R-N.J.) charged that “only the most naïve or gullible” individual would interpret the President’s revision as any sort of change or improvement. “The newest iteration of Obama’s coercion rule utterly fails because it still forces religious employers and employees who have moral objections to paying for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization and contraception to pay for these things — because it is still the employers who buy the coverage for their employees. Today’s announcement is a political manipulation designed to get Obama past his own self-made controversy and past the next election.”

Smith called Obama’s “fact sheet” on the mandate a classic example of political double-speak. “It states, for example, that religious employers ‘will not’ have to pay for abortion pills, sterilization and contraception, but their ‘insurance companies’ will,” the congressman noted. But “who pays for the insurance policy? The religious employer.”

Smith said that the President had “tipped his hand” with the announcement. “At the end of the day,” he warned, Obama “will use force, coercion, and ruinous fines that put faith-based charities, hospitals, and schools at risk of closure, harming millions of kids, as well as the poor, sick, and disabled, that they serve, in order to force obedience to Obama’s will.”

One anonymous pro-life individual on Capitol Hill told [LifeNews.com](#) that the “change” amounts to a “distinction without a difference.” Said the source: “The services the religious organization opposes won’t be listed in the contract, but the insurance companies will give it to the employees anyway. Insurance companies will justify providing the coverage that the religious charity opposes by swearing that birth control coverage doesn’t actually cost anything because it’s cheaper than pregnancy services, so it’s just a free perk. The administration will argue that people of faith should be fine with this arrangement, because they can tell their conscience that they aren’t really paying for the objectionable coverage and they didn’t really sign up for it anyway.”

Tony Perkins of the [Family Research Council](#) (FRC) sounded off quickly on the smoke-and-mirror “revision,” saying that it “does nothing to change the fundamentally anti-religious, anti-conscience, and anti-life contraceptive mandate.” Instead, he said, it merely “creates some paperwork gimmicks that don’t change the fact that religious employers who object to coverage of these services will now have to drop health insurance altogether to maintain their conscience and face severe penalties for doing so.”



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Noting that Obama's contraception mandate requires insurance companies to provide women, free of charge, contraceptive drugs that work as abortifacients, Marjorie Dannenfelser of the pro-life [Susan B. Anthony List](#) said that "forcing insurance companies to be directly responsible for providing abortion-inducing drugs and forcing religious organizations to cooperate is an assault on religious freedom.... This intrusion on rights of conscience by the Obama Administration claiming concern for 'women's rights' or 'human rights' puts dangerous ideology over liberty."

Since the [White House announced the mandate](#) through Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on January 20, Christian leaders and institutions, led largely by the Catholic Church, have increasingly come out in vocal opposition, saying that they have no intention of following the rule. As reported by [The New American](#), letters sent by diocesan bishops to Catholic churches across the nation have declared: "We cannot — we will not — comply with this unjust law," intimating that their only option may be civil disobedience.

Likewise, Dr. Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention's [Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission \(ERLC\)](#) suggested that members of his denomination might have to resort to civil disobedience over the mandate. "In my opinion, a Baptist needs to take a stand on this issue," he wrote in a recent column. "Our Baptist forefathers went to prison and died for the freedoms that we have, and now it's our responsibility in the providence of God to defend these freedoms lest they be taken away by government fiat."

And on February 7, noted pastor Rick Warren wrote on Twitter that "I'd go to jail rather than cave in to a government mandate that violates what God commands us to do. Would you? Acts 5:29." He added that while he is not a Catholic, "I stand in 100% solidarity with my brothers & sisters to practice their belief against govt pressure."

Noted the FRC's Tony Perkins of Obama's most recent political maneuver: "The President and his senior counselors have run into an immovable wall of truth which is fixed and absolute. No political machinations they attempt will surmount the unshakeable religious and moral convictions of those of us opposing this government order."

*Photo: President Barack Obama and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius leave the Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House, Feb. 10, 2012, after the president announced a supposed "compromise" regarding his contraception policy requiring religious institutions to fully pay for birth control: AP Images*



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