



Romney's Criticism of Obama's Contraception Policy Rings Hollow

"Governor Romney stands with the Catholic Bishops and all religious organizations in their strenuous objection to this liberty- and conscience-stifling regulation," Romney spokeswoman Andrea Saul [said](#) on February 7. "He is committed to repealing Obamacare entirely. On his first day in office, Mitt Romney will eliminate the Obama administration rule that compels religious institutions to violate the tenets of their own faith."



Romney himself contended that the administration's decision was part of "an assault on religion" that "will end if I'm president of the United States."

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Asked about Romney's criticism of the birth-control rule during a February 8 press briefing, White House Press Secretary Jay Carney proved that his boss has been keeping up with his opposition research. [Said Carney:](#)

You know, the former Governor of Massachusetts is an odd messenger on this given that the services that this rule would provide for women around the country are the same that were provided in Massachusetts and were provided when he was Governor — including contraception, including, you know, covered with no co-pay or deductible, religious exemptions for houses of worship and churches, and church-controlled organizations such as parochial schools but not to universities and hospitals.

Carney added that he found it "ironic" that Romney was "criticizing the president for pursuing a policy that's virtually identical to the one that was in place when he was Governor of Massachusetts."

The Obama campaign website backed up Carney's statements with an ["infographic"](#) demonstrating the parallels between RomneyCare's contraception rules and ObamaCare's, citing relevant portions of Massachusetts law. It twisted the knife further by reminding readers that ObamaCare is "based on the law [Romney] passed in Massachusetts" — a law "providing women with the same access to contraception and preventive health care services" as ObamaCare.

The Romney campaign [disputed](#) these assertions, arguing that the contraception coverage mandates were on the books before Romney became Governor and that he proposed eliminating them as part of his healthcare reform package. The fact remains, however, that Romney signed the bill into law with those mandates still in place, so he must bear some blame for their continued existence.

If the worst that could be said about Romney regarding his criticism of ObamaCare is that he is a hypocrite, it would hardly rate mentioning among all his other flip-flops. But, as it happens, Romney not



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only forced contraception coverage on Catholic institutions in Massachusetts but also went Obama one better by mandating that all hospitals provide contraceptives including the “Plan B” pill, an abortifacient, to rape victims. Moreover, Romney’s decision to enforce the mandate on Catholic hospitals occurred the year after his supposed conversion to the pro-life cause and just two days after agreeing with the state Department of Public Health that existing law provided a religious exemption to the mandate.

Romney, who had run for Governor as a supporter of abortion rights, claims that in 2004 he had an epiphany while discussing embryonic stem-cell research and converted to a pro-life stance.

The next year the Massachusetts legislature passed a bill that, according to [CNSNews.com](#), “allowed pharmacists to sell Plan B — an abortifacient — without a prescription and without parental consent. It also ... required all hospitals to inform rape victims of the availability of such ‘emergency contraceptives’ and provide them to the rape victim if she wanted them even when they would cause an abortion.”

Catholic Church officials expressed their opposition to the bill when it was first proposed, in 2004. They explained that while the church accepted the use of contraception for rape victims, it opposed aborting an already-conceived child under any circumstances. Their hospitals would not comply with such a law, they said.

When the bill passed, the church continued to oppose it on the grounds that it would facilitate abortions. However, the church hung its hopes for religious freedom on a 1975 Bay State law that states: “No privately controlled hospital ... shall be required to permit any patient to have an abortion ... or to furnish contraceptive devices or information to such patient ... when said services or referrals are contrary to the religious or moral principles of said hospital.” Since the 2005 bill did not expressly override the existing law, the church argued, Catholic hospitals could safely opt out of the Plan B mandate.

Romney, who had pointedly refused to take a position on the bill prior to its passage, vetoed it, writing in the *Boston Globe* that he did so because “the drug it authorizes would ... terminate life after conception.” The legislature overrode his veto, and the bill became law. The only question was whether the Governor, charged with enforcing the law, would force Catholic hospitals to comply with it.

At first it appeared he would not. Says [CNSNews.com](#):

On Dec. 7, 2005, a week before the law was to take effect, the *Boston Globe* ran a piece headlined: “Private Hospitals Exempt on Pill Law.” The article said the state Department of Public Health had determined that the emergency contraception law “does not nullify a statute passed years ago that says privately run hospitals cannot be forced to provide abortions or contraception.”

... Romney spokesman [Eric] Fehrstrom told the *Globe* that Romney agreed with the Department of Public Health on the issue. The governor, he said, “respects the views of health care facilities that are guided by moral principles on this issue.”

Romney’s respect for such facilities was short-lived. After just two days of attacks from pro-choice forces and their allies at the *Globe*, Romney announced that he had changed his mind. Explaining that his legal counsel had advised him that the 2005 law did indeed override the 1975 law, Romney said he had “instructed the Department of Public Health to ... adopt that sounder view.” “In my personal view,” he added, “it’s the right thing for hospitals to provide information and access to emergency



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contraception to anyone who is a victim of rape.” That includes those hospitals that object to doing so — the ones whose views Romney had claimed to respect only 48 hours before.

As bad as Obama’s contraception policy is, Romney’s was far worse. Under Obama’s interpretation of the federal healthcare law, Catholic hospitals will have to pay for contraception coverage, but that coverage may never be used. On the other hand, under Romney’s interpretation of the Massachusetts emergency contraception law, Catholic hospitals were forced to dispense abortifacients. Add to that the fact that RomneyCare also forces taxpayers to subsidize the murder of the unborn, and the former Governor has absolutely no room to criticize the President for his assault on religious freedom. Should the GOP choose to nominate him this year, the party would be severely hampered in its ability to attack Obama at one of his weakest points, which would not bode well for its chances of electoral success.

Photo of Mitt Romney: AP Images



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