



NOW Puts Little Sisters of the Poor on “Dirty Hundred” List

The National Organization for Women has put The Little Sisters of the Poor on a list of “Dirty 100” organizations waging legal battles against the federal mandate for contraceptive coverage in health insurance provided by employers. The designation has caused no small amount of controversy, most notably on [The Kelly File](#) on Fox News Tuesday night, when Megyn Kelly challenged former NOW president Patricia Ireland over the “dirty” designation for an organization of nuns who “operate homes in 31 countries where they provide care for over 13,000 needy, elderly persons, many of whom are dying.” Kelly preceded the interview with a video clip about the organization. An on-screen graphic said the Little Sisters treat the people they care for “as if they were Christ.”



“These people are still valuable,” a nun is heard saying as the video shows elderly persons, some of them in wheelchairs, engaging in various activities. “They are God’s creation.”

“Dirty,” Kelly said at the end of the clip. “Really, Patricia?”

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Ireland said the name for the list was a takeoff on *The Dirty Dozen*, a name that became famous as the title of a 1967 movie about Americans convicted of murder who were employed on a mission to assassinate German officers in World War II. “The Dirty 100” list includes “car companies, management companies, food companies ... contractors” and others that have filed suit against enforcement of the mandate, Ireland said. It also includes Priests for Life, an organization of priests and laity that advocates against the death penalty and abortion, and 12 Catholic dioceses, the *Washington Examiner* reported.

“Maybe we should have called it the ‘Dirty Eight-Dozen Plus Four,’” Ireland said.

“Maybe you should have called it ‘Groups With Whom We Disagree,’” Kelly countered.

The Supreme Court last week upheld the right of two companies, Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties, to refuse to provide coverage for some forms of birth control. Included among the medical procedures covered by the mandate are some that are called abortifacients, in that they terminate the life of a fertilized ovum. Like the Little Sisters of the Poor and other religiously affiliated organizations, the owners of the two privately held, for-profit corporations claimed they try to run their businesses according to their religious beliefs and that to provide the required coverage would violate those beliefs. The requirement has also been challenged in 50 other cases, according to the Becket Fund for



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Religious Liberty, which represented Hobby Lobby.

“The dirty trick is, they are trying to take their religious beliefs and impose them on their employees,” said Ireland. “They’ve lost the battle of persuasion,” she said of Catholic organizations. “Ninety-eight percent of Catholic women use birth control.”

“But we don’t all expect our bosses to pay for it,” Kelly replied.

The contraception mandate was not written into the Affordable Care Act (“ObamaCare”) that Congress passed and President Obama signed into law in early 2010, but is among the regulations promulgated under that law by former Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. The regulation does not affect houses of worship, but does cover religious-affiliated non-profit organizations, such as hospitals, schools, and charitable groups. Those organizations may opt out by authorizing another party to provide for their employees the contraceptive coverage not included in the company’s healthcare plan. The Little Sisters of the Poor have that option, Ireland reminded Kelly. The nuns, however, have refused to authorize another party do what they believe is sinful. “They see that as an endorsement,” Kelly said.

“Are you Catholic?” she asked Ireland. Without waiting for an answer, she continued: “Well I am. We follow rules. It’s not a religion for wusses!”

“You follow the rules, but you don’t follow the law?” Ireland said, noting the mandate is of “general applicability.”

“The law is being challenged and the Supreme Court has sided with the Little Sisters of the Poor,” Kelly said, apparently in reference to the decision in the Hobby Lobby case. Kelly repeatedly challenged Ireland to say whether she would be in favor of a government mandate requiring employers to pay for surgical abortions.

“Well, if there is an opt-out provision,” Ireland said. “But I have a problem with corporations who accept the benefits of being a corporation and then turn around and say. ‘Oh, no, no I’m really an individual.’ Corporations don’t have religious beliefs, individual people do,” Ireland said, disputing what she called the Supreme Court’s “illogical conclusion that a corporation is a person.”

Abortion opponents “don’t have to pay for anything they don’t want to if they are a legitimate religious institution,” she said, though that puts the government in the position of deciding which religious institutions are “legitimate.” Ireland neither stated nor implied, however, that the Little Sisters of the Poor are not a legitimate religious institution.

“I love hospice work, I love what they do,” she said.

“But why do you call a group of nuns ‘dirty’?” Kelly insisted. “It’s bad!”

“Hey, it’s like the ‘Dirty Dozen.’ It’s a bad reference, perhaps,” Ireland conceded.

Katie Povich at TownHall.com weighed in on the controversy with “a thought for Ms. Ireland, who argues the Little Sisters of the Poor should simply ‘opt-out.’ If women want contraception coverage, they have the option of opting out of jobs that do not provide what they are looking for.”

“The bottom line,” Povich continued “is NOW isn’t interested in defending the rights of women, they’re interested in defending big government policies. Last time I checked nuns were women too, but for some reason the National Organization for *Women* isn’t interested in defending their right to freedom of religion, but is interested in defining women by the pills they take. It’s a shame NOW supports the



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heavy hand of government forcing women to do things that are against their beliefs.”



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