



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 26, 2011

HHS Cuts Funds to Catholic Bishops Who Help Human Trafficking Victims

The American Civil Liberties Union finally got its way. The pro-abortion Obama administration's Health and Human Services Department, led by renegade Catholic Kathleen Sebelius (left), has cut off funding for the Catholic bishops' program to help victims of human trafficking. The decision ends \$2.5 million in funding for the bishops' office of Migration and Refugee Services, which provides help to women exploited by those who would force them into hard labor, and often into prostitution. The women become virtual sex slaves.



The ACLU [sued](#) the government in 2009, and having offered arguments in federal court just last week, pushed Sebelius and her boss into ending the subsidies.

Two weeks ago, Sebelius [explained to](#) a crowd of abortion proponents at a luncheon for [NARAL Pro-Choice America](#) that she and her allies were in a "war" for abortion.

No Money for Catholics

[According to](#) the *National Catholic Register*, the trouble began for the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) on Sept. 29, when the administration sent down a warning: Fund abortions or else. Naturally, the warning wasn't worded that way. Instead, Archbishop [Timothy Dolan](#) reported, federal officials used the usual euphemism for killing the unborn.

[Reported NCR](#), "Dolan had warned that the administration was 'requiring that Migration and Refugee Services provide the 'full range of reproductive services' to trafficking victims and unaccompanied minors in its cooperative agreements and government contracts.'"

Unsurprisingly, the bishops are none to happy, given the aid they provide to women victimized by traffickers.

Sr. Mary Ann Walsh, USCCB spokesman, [told CNS News.com](#) the decision is obviously unfair. And HHS "did not explain why it turned down the Catholic Church's application, but that in accepting bids to provide services for victims of human trafficking, the HHS funding announcement stated that it would give 'preference' to grantees that offer victims a referral to medical providers who do provide abortion and family planning services." CNS News continued,

"The contract pointed out that 'preference' would be given to those who offer 'the full-range of legally permissible gynecological and obstetric care,' which is a codeword for artificial contraception, sterilization and abortion," [Walsh told](#) CNSNews.com.

Walsh pointed out that the funding announcement did not state that faith-based organizations would be excluded, but rather, she said, "required an explanation of the limits of services provided by an organization with an estimated impact and a plan for mitigating the impact."



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Walsh said the USCCB explained in its application that its Migrant and Refugee Services (MRS) section had worked with 163 organizations ranging from the Salvation Army to the YMCA to Lutheran Family Services to help more than 2,700 victims.

USCCB's MRS will refer clients to outside agencies for help that do not trespass Catholic teaching on [abortion, contraception, and sterilization](#). Sister Walsh [also told](#) CNS News that MRS had seen no evidence that such rules harmed women.

Nevertheless, Sebelius cut off the money.

The Usual Suspects

It's no surprise that the [ACLU of Massachusetts](#) is involved. The ACLU, [founded by](#) avowed communist Roger Baldwin, is at the forefront of the legal movement to ensure that murdering the unborn remains legal in the United States. It thus opposes any and all restrictions on abortion.

In this case, the ACLU of Massachusetts [filed suit](#) in the state's [federal district court](#) in 2009. At the time of the filing, [CNS News reported](#), ACLU called funding an organization that helps women, but won't encourage them to kill their unborn children, a terrible injustice.

[According to](#) the ACLU's complaint, funding the bishops trespassed the First Amendment: "Defendants have violated and continue to violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment by permitting USCCB to impose a religiously based restriction on the use of taxpayer funds."

[Explained Daniel Mach](#), the ACLU's top legal representative in charge of its [legal war on Christianity](#), "For more than two years, the Bush administration has sanctioned the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' blatant misuse of taxpayer dollars. It has allowed USCCB to impose its religious beliefs on trafficking victims by prohibiting sub grantees from ensuring access to services like emergency contraception, condoms, and abortion care."

Staff lawyer [Sara Wunsch explained](#) that the lawsuit was all about "safety":

We are asking the court to stop this misuse of taxpayer dollars and to protect the health and safety of trafficking victims. Trafficking victims need comprehensive and compassionate care to gain their freedom and lead safe and healthy lives.

On October 18, the ACLU [was in court](#) on the matter. In its statement on that proceeding, [ACLU said](#) that "Although HHS did not renew USCCB's contract this year, the ACLU seeks a judgment to ensure that taxpayer dollars are never misused to impose religious restrictions on vulnerable trafficking victims that receive U.S. aid."

Two of ACLU's pro-abortion lawyers spoke on the matter. [Said Brigitte Amiri](#), who works on behalf of the ACLU's [Reproductive Freedom Project](#):

Victims of human trafficking are often forced into horrific circumstances beyond their control. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that they be provided with the full range of services, including reproductive health care, they need to recover from their ordeal and live safe and healthy lives.

[Averred Wunsch:](#)

Human trafficking is the modern-day equivalent of slavery. Taxpayer funds should not be given to organizations that withhold vital services from vulnerable victims based on religious doctrine — that is a blatant violation of the separation between church and state.



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Wunsch did not explain whether she opposed the involvement of religious persons in the abolition of slavery in the 19th century.

Can Bishops Prevail?

For her part, Sister Walsh [told CNS News](#) that the bishops might well prevail in their battle to preserve funding for their program. Three federal laws, she said, prohibit discriminating against religious organizations in funding based upon their teachings.

The first is the [Church Amendment of 1973](#), which flatly states that HHS is wrong. [According to](#) that legislation, “The receipt of any grant, contract, loan, or loan guarantee under the Public Health Service Act ..., the Community Mental Health Centers Act, the Developmental Disabilities Services and Facilities Construction Act, any individual or entity does not authorize any court or any public official or other public authority to require” any of the following:

That “such individual ... perform or assist in the performance of any sterilization procedure or abortion if his performance or assistance in the performance of such procedure or abortion would be contrary to his religious beliefs or moral convictions.”

Nor may any public official or authority require “such entity to —

(A) make its facilities available for the performance of any sterilization procedure or abortion if the performance of such procedure or abortion in such facilities is prohibited by the entity on the basis of religious beliefs or moral convictions, or

(B) provide any personnel for the performance or assistance in the performance of any sterilization procedure or abortion if the performance or assistance in the performance of such procedures or abortion by such personnel would be contrary to the religious beliefs or moral convictions of such personnel.

Sister Walsh [also cited](#) another law, authored by Senators [Dan Coats](#) (R-Ind.) and [Olympia Snowe](#) (R-Maine), which prohibits the government from discriminating in funding health organizations that refuse to perform abortions or train others to perform them.

The law [is clear](#): “The Federal Government, and any State or local government that receives Federal financial assistance, may not subject any health care entity to discrimination on the basis” on the following grounds:

(1) [that] the entity refuses to undergo training in the performance of induced abortions, to require or provide such training, to perform such abortions, or to provide referrals for such training or such abortions.

(2) [that] the entity refuses to make arrangements for any of the activities specified in paragraph (1).

A third amendment uses similar language that says that health organizations may refuse to provide abortions.



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