

STAND UP FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

HHS MANDATE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is the HHS Mandate?

The “HHS Mandate” is a new rule announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on January 20, 2012. It requires nearly all employers to provide health plans that include free contraceptives, sterilizations and abortion inducing drugs.

The HHS Mandate was issued under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”), under which the Department of Health and Human Services was authorized to require “preventive care” services to be provided by employer health plans without co-pays.

Many employers—including religious employers like Catholic schools and charities—object to the HHS Mandate because it requires them to provide services they believe are morally objectionable.

How does the HHS Mandate attack religious freedom?

The HHS Mandate attacks religious freedom in two ways:

First, the HHS Mandate forces employers to cooperate with activities they believe are immoral, imposing heavy fines if such employers choose not to violate their religious convictions or consciences by providing such services.

Secondly, and more significantly, the HHS Mandate breaches the First Amendment’s establishment clause in drawing its narrow definition of what constitutes religious ministry.

It is not for the federal government to declare as insufficiently religious activities which have always been understood to fall within the sphere of religious ministry, like feeding the hungry, caring for the sick and educating children.

Isn’t there a religious exemption to the HHS Mandate?

Yes and no. There is a “religious exemption” in the HHS Mandate, but it is so narrowly drawn that it excludes hundreds if not thousands of religious institutions.

Religious employers are exempt from the HHS Mandate only if their purpose is to inculcate religious doctrine and if they hire and serve exclusively people of their own faith.

The ministries of institutions like Catholic schools, hospitals and charities—educating the young, caring for the sick, feeding the hungry—are not considered sufficiently religious to qualify for the Mandate’s narrow “religious exemption.”

Isn’t this really all about access to contraception?

President Obama, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and the pro-abortion choice movement have manufactured a so-called “contraception access” crisis. Contraceptives are already widely, cheaply available, and no one is proposing any kind of ban on contraception.

Planned Parenthood CEO Cecile Richards boasts that the vast majority of American women are already using contraception. Who doesn’t have access to birth control?

Contraception is inexpensive already—for example, \$5 to \$15 a month for generic birth control pills, or free through federally funded clinics. So who can’t afford birth control?

Having “access” to something does not mean having it paid for by someone else—especially against their moral convictions.

But the HHS Mandate doesn’t stop with free contraceptives: it also requires employer health plans to provide drugs capable of inducing abortion during the early days of pregnancy.

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Why isn't President Obama's "accommodation" good enough?

On February 10, President Obama proposed that insurance providers, rather than employers, would pay for the services to which religious employers have moral objections. However, this so-called "accommodation" does not solve anything.

Since any funds the insurance companies would use to make such payments ultimately come from the premiums paid by employers, Obama's "accommodation" is nothing more than a kind of economic shell-game. Employers are still funding services they morally object to.

In addition, no relief is provided for self-insured religious institutions, which number in the hundreds if not thousands.

In the final analysis, the so-called "accommodation" still forces religious institutions to provide employees with health plans covering free "services" that violate their religious convictions—or face crippling fines should they refuse.

Moreover, the HHS finalized the Mandate as originally drafted, without any changes to the original payment scheme and narrow "religious exemption," leaving the implementation of any "accommodation" until 2013—long after the November elections.

Are all the services covered by the HHS Mandate really preventive care?

No. Contraception, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs are not truly "preventive care" because they do not prevent an illness or disease. Pregnancy and childbirth are not a disease. Motherhood is not a medical condition. Fertility is not an illness—on the contrary, fertility is a marker of good health.

Moreover, many contraceptives, like the birth control pill, are recognized carcinogens (cancer causing agents), further underlining the fiction that they constitute "preventive care."

What do you hope to accomplish with this Stand Up for Religious Freedom Rally?

Today's rally is just the beginning. This Rally for Religious Freedom in over 150 American cities shows that opposition to the HHS Mandate is widespread and growing.

We're calling on Congress to enact legislation to overturn the HHS Mandate and restore our cherished freedom of religion.

We're encouraging all who recognize this assault on religious liberty for what it is to vote in the primary and general elections this year for candidates who oppose the HHS Mandate and who will promise to rescind it.

We're showing our support for the U.S. Catholic Bishops and other faith leaders standing up against the HHS Mandate. They can count on us to carry this fight together to victory.

How did President Obama choose the wrong partner for health care reform?

When President Obama moved forward with health care reform in 2009, he made a critical error. He chose to partner not with the faith-based institutions that have been meeting the healthcare needs of poor and disadvantaged for centuries, but with Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion chain.

From that partnership came the HHS Mandate, which places the "right" to free contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs above our most basic freedoms of religion and conscience.

What about the Supreme Court's upcoming Obamacare decision?

The date of June 8 was chosen for this rally in anticipation of the Supreme Court's Obamacare decision, expected later this month.

If Obamacare is ruled unconstitutional, this public protest helps ensure religious freedom is protected in future health care legislation.

But if Obamacare is not struck down, we're putting the federal government on notice that the faith-based institutions and private businesses affected by the HHS Mandate will not violate their consciences by complying with it.