

# BISHOPS RESPOND TO NEW HHS RULES



Bill Donohue comments on the response by the bishops to the revised Health and Human Services (HHS) rules that were released last Friday:

Today's statement by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and the remarks made by its president, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, make plain their interest in pursuing the on-going conversation with Obama administration officials on the HHS mandate. Their goal, as expressed by Cardinal Dolan, is to reach "an acceptable solution" to this issue.

The Catholic hierarchy wants to broaden the understanding of what constitutes a religious ministry. Cardinal Dolan also addressed funding for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraception, saying "there remains the possibility that ministries may yet be forced to fund and facilitate such morally illicit activities." The third issue of concern is the right of those who own a business in the private-sector not to fund such activities.

In my statement of February 1, I made it clear that "many aspects of the new [HHS] proposal need to be examined before a final conclusion can be rendered." Because I did not slam the Obama administration, some took my words to mean that I was celebrating the new rules. If that is what I meant, I would have said so. They also objected to my comment that we welcome "the goodwill by the Obama administration." I stand by that remark, noting that in the first sentence of today's statement by the USCCB, the bishops credit the new rules with "some improvement by the Administration but falls short of addressing the bishops' concerns."

There are plenty of players on both sides of this issue. Make no mistake about it, the interest of the Catholic League is to advance the interests of the Catholic community; it is ably led by Cardinal Dolan and his brother bishops. We are not here to exploit this issue for fundraising purposes, or to help the Republican Party. And while some may prefer to settle this matter in court, settling it out of court is hardly unsatisfactory. What matters is that the right results be achieved.