

# CATHOLIC CHURCH vs. OBAMA SHOWDOWN

On December 1, the House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform held a hearing titled, "HHS and the Catholic Church: Examining the Politicization of Grants." At issue was the decision by the Obama administration to deny a grant that the Catholic Church routinely receives providing for relief to the victims of human trafficking; the ruling was made despite an independent review board's finding that gave high scores to the Church's program.

The Church was denied the grant because it refuses to offer abortion referrals. Many Catholics, including the Catholic League, argued that the politicized nature of the decision to defund the program demanded the hearing. Since 2006, the Church has helped more than 2,700 trafficking victims, most of whom are women and children.

Although the issue of abortion referral was on the table, the real issue was something more sinister: the pro-abortion community, which is supporting the Obama administration's push to mandate that private healthcare plans provide coverage for sterilization and contraceptive services, has its real sights set on mandated abortion coverage. Everyone knows that even minimum-wage earners can afford contraceptives, so this issue hardly explains the heated rhetoric. What mandated contraceptive services accomplishes is that it greases the slide towards abortion coverage.

The USCCB grant proposal was awarded a score of 89, yet it was denied the grant. Two other organizations, with scores of 74 and 69, were given a grant. The hearing sought to determine whether the USCCB's opposition to abortion referral killed its chances.

In his opening statement at the hearing, George Sheldon, Acting Assistant HHS secretary for the Administration for Children and Families, said that “HHS did not establish a preference for grantees that would require each individual subgrantees to provide referrals for family planning and the full range of legally permissible gynecological and obstetric care.”

The following exchange between Sheldon and Rep. Trey Gowdy calls into question Sheldon’s veracity:

**Rep. Trey Gowdy:** “The truth be told, if the Catholic bishops had scored a 100, you still wouldn’t have picked them.”

**George Sheldon:** “That’s not necessarily accurate.”

**Gowdy:** “Well, would you have—if they scored a 100? Is an 89 not enough?”

**Sheldon:** “Well, I’m dealing with the facts in front of me.”

**Gowdy:** “Assume this fact then: If they scored a 95, would that have been high enough?”

**Sheldon:** “I cannot without looking at the facts, the other applicants—I cannot respond to...”

Those who do not ascribe to the vision of sexuality entertained by “progressives,” but are nonetheless not terribly bothered by the push for contraceptive services in healthcare plans, need to wake up before the “progressives” start racing for home. This is the top of the home stretch, which is why this hearing was critical.

When asked about this, Bill Donohue said, “Anyone who can’t figure out what is going on with the Obama administration is either hopelessly partisan or in sheer denial.”