

CONSCIENCE RIGHTS IMPERILED?

When President Obama selected Dr. Eric Goosby to be the new U.S. global AIDS coordinator and director of the Emergency Plan for AIDS relief, we were a bit concerned. The problem with this selection wasn't so much Goosby as it was the pressure he would be under to deny conscience rights to those who work for such agencies as Catholic Relief Services. Moreover, we said that the progress made under the Bush Administration combating AIDS in Africa is now in jeopardy.

Dr. Mark R. Dybul was in charge of this office under President Bush. An openly gay man, he worked to insure the conscience rights for Catholic workers and made certain that abstinence programs were not gutted in the fight against AIDS. On January 9, he was told that he had been asked by President-elect Obama to stay on the job. But as soon as Obama was sworn in, Dybul was thrown out: the day after Hillary Clinton was confirmed as secretary of state, he was notified by her staff to find another job. Why? News reports show that Dybul was accused of working too closely with the Catholic Church. Goosby's name was then floated, but because it seemed like a rush to judgment, many complained that the process was unfair. So Goosby's appointment was held up.

Right now, agencies like Catholic Relief Services can opt out of programs that provide for condom distribution. But under Goosby, this may change. He will be under enormous pressure by radical feminists, gay activists and assorted sexologists to force faith-based organizations to get on board or get out. But Goosby should take note that a recent poll found that a great majority of Americans favor conscience right protection for health care providers.

The scientific evidence on AIDS prevention in Africa shows that nothing succeeds better than partner reduction; the Catholic Church has led the way in this effort. As recently

demonstrated by Helen Epstein in *The Invisible Cure: Africa, the West and the Fight Against AIDS*, partner reduction has been more effective than condom use in fighting AIDS in Africa. Yet condom worship continues unabated, especially in the White House.