

# LIBERTY THWARTED

As the Fourth of July approached, there were ominous signs that religious liberty is in deep trouble in America.

On June 21, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ruled that California can continue to force all health care plans—including those of religious institutions—to cover elective abortions. HHS simply disregarded the Weldon Amendment, enacted by Congress in 2005. It specifically prohibits states from forcing any health care entity to provide abortions. Among the affected entities that sought to invoke the Weldon Amendment are two Catholic universities, Santa Clara and Loyola Marymount.

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas law that would have simply subjected abortion clinics to the same health and safety standards as other health care facilities—common sense requirements like adequate staffing, sanitary conditions, hallways accessible for emergency equipment, and doctors having admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. The high court's 5-3 ruling makes it more difficult for states to restrict abortions, though this will not be the last word on this issue.

The next day, the high court refused to hear an appeal from pro-life pharmacists in Washington state objecting to a law forcing them to dispense abortion-inducing drugs.

"If this is a sign of how religious liberty claims will be treated in the years ahead," wrote dissenting justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas and Chief Justice John Roberts, "those who value religious freedom have cause for great concern."

True, but it is all the more reason why we can't give up.