

NEW ASSAULT ON RELIGIOUS RIGHTS



Bill Donohue comments on the latest assault on religious rights:

Anticipating a loss in the Hobby Lobby case, the Obama administration, together with Congressional Democrats, worked overtime this year on a law that would effectively gut the high court ruling. They also plotted to gut the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), upon which the case is based. This assault on the First Amendment will be presented tomorrow when the Senate votes on the Protect Women's Health from Corporate Interference Act.

RFRA was passed by an almost unanimous decision in 1993, and was signed by President Clinton. The sponsors of this new bill say they are not taking aim at RFRA, but in fact they are: it is a stop-gap measure designed to cripple RFRA. Rep. Diana DeGette, a co-author of the House version of this law, has already stated that this bill is "an interim solution"; she pledged to then "look at broader issues, including the Religious Freedom Restoration Act." Their goal is to ultimately kill RFRA.

This bill is a deliberate attempt to circumvent the will of the Congress, as expressed in RFRA, and the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby ruling. It is being done in the name of women's rights, but its real impulse is to privatize religious expression, relegating it to the margins of society. Moreover, this bill has nothing to do with contraception, per se: the Hobby Lobby decision was driven by the right of some private

employers not to pay for abortion procedures. This bill would force all employers to pay for abortifacients, and ultimately all abortions.

This law also seeks to ratify the most odious elements of the Health and Human Services mandate: it wants to redefine what constitutes a Catholic non-profit, effectively punishing Catholic social service agencies for not discriminating against non-Catholics.

The Catholic League strongly supports the statement released yesterday by Cardinal Seán O'Malley and Archbishop William Lori on this law: we need more religious rights, not less.