

NEW 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 was based. This assault on the First Amendment was recently presented when the Senate voted 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 said they were not taking aim at RFRA, but in fact they were: 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 new bill has been a deliberate attempt to circumvent the will of the Congress, as expressed in RFRA, and the Supreme Court's *Hobby Lobby* ruling. It was 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 had 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 sought to ratify the most odious elements of the Health and Human Services mandate: it wanted 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 that was released by Cardinal Seán O'Malley and Archbishop William Lori on this law: we need more religious rights, not less.