

# OBAMA MANDATE NEVER SCRUTINIZED

Following her recent testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Kathleen Sebelius was asked whether she spoke to the bishops about the controversial mandate she is pushing. She admitted she did not. Then she said, "I know that the president has spoken to the bishops on several occasions."

Sebelius was wrong. Bishop William Lori, who heads the bishops' *Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty*, recently said that administration officials should have sat down with the bishops. "That certainly did not happen," he said. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who heads the bishops' conference, met once with the president, and that was last November; the two phone calls he had since were to inform him that the bishops' religious liberty concerns would not be honored.

Under questioning from Sen. Orrin Hatch, Sebelius further admitted that HHS never subjected the religious liberty issues to a legal analysis, as requested by 27 senators. She also admitted that she never asked the Justice Department to consider this issue.

Worse was a *New York Times* report that the administration announced the Obama mandate "before it had figured out how to address one conspicuous point: Like most large employers, many religiously affiliated organizations choose to insure themselves rather than hire an outside company to assume the risk." As the *Times* pointed out, this is not a slight issue: 60 percent of all workers with health insurance are covered by a self-funded plan, and the figure is 82 percent for large companies.

So they refused to consult with the bishops; they refused to

weigh the First Amendment religious liberty concerns; and they refused to study how the mandate might impact self-insured companies. In other words, with characteristic arrogance, they just “winged it.”