

# OBAMA PLAYS CATCH-22 WITH RELIGIOUS GROUPS

In August, the Obama administration mandated that all health insurance plans cover contraceptives and sterilization for women, though it made an exception for religious employers. But when looked at closer, it became apparent that the exception was flatulent. To wit: a religious employer was defined, in part, as one that primarily employs, and serves, persons who share its religious tenets.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo said this means that “our institutions would be free to act in accord with Catholic teaching on life and procreation only if they were to stop hiring and serving non-Catholics.” He was absolutely right: Catholic schools, hospitals and social service agencies have a long and distinguished record of serving everyone, regardless of religious affiliation; most even employ non-Catholics. However, there are matters, like foster care programs, where same-religion requisites make sense.

The situation was even more pernicious than it initially appeared. Consider that three years ago, then presidential candidate Barack Obama said he opposed allowing faith-based programs to hire only their own people. Since becoming president, he has authorized his administration to consider this issue on a case-by-case basis, and just recently many of his allies lobbied him to gut the religious liberty provision in hiring altogether.

In other words, the Obama administration is playing Catch-22 with religious employers. If they are too religious, Catholic social service agencies risk losing federal funds, but if Catholic hospitals are not sufficiently religious, they cannot be exempt from carrying health insurance policies that transgress their religious tenets.

The Obama administration knows exactly what it is doing, and what it is doing is burning religious institutions at both ends. This is a pretty sick game. But it is one where there is plenty of time left on the clock