

# OBAMA PLAYS CATCH-22 WITH RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addresses the dilemma that the Obama administration has created for religious employers:

Yesterday, the Obama administration mandated that all health insurance plans cover contraceptives and sterilization for women, though it made an exception for religious employers. But did it? Not really. To wit: a religious employer is 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’s 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 is even more pernicious than it looks. Consider that three years ago, then presidential candidate Barack Obama said he opposes 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.