OPPOSITION TO HEALTHCARE MANDATE GROWS

The announcement on January 20 by Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius that religious non-profits will have to cover sterilization and contraceptive services, including some abortion-inducing drugs, is being met with growing rancor. Catholic League president Bill Donohue speaks to this issue today:

Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, responded to the Obama administration's edict by saying, "Never before has the federal government forced individuals and organizations to go into the marketplace and buy a product that violates their conscience."

Joining him in this assessment is an unlikely ally, namely the editorial board of the *Washington Post*. Today, the editorial on this subject says that "requiring a religiously affiliated employer to spend its own money in a way that violates its religious principles does not make an adequate accommodation for those deeply held views."

Michael Sean Winters at the liberal *National Catholic Reporter* was highly critical of the Obama edict; he even went so far as to say that Obama "lost my vote" as a result of this decision. Some prominent priests and nuns who initially supported Obamacare have also expressed their opposition to this ruling.

What's going on? Many of those who tend to side with abortion-rights advocates also hold to the very American principle of respecting conscience rights; when these issues collide, the latter proves decisive.

The Obama administration made a fatal flaw when it assumed that most people are not going to get worked up about healthcare plans that carry contraceptive coverage. If the plans were voluntarily adopted, the administration would be right. But the difference in this instance is that this service is being mandated by the federal government, allowing no exceptions for those who in good conscience cannot go along; the inclusion of abortifacients in the policy only deepens the problem.

There is a high price paid for arrogance in politics. Stay tuned—this issue isn't going to go away.