

# RELIGIOUS RIGHTS FOR FED CONTRACTORS SPIKE

The Trump administration has released a proposal that would strengthen the religious rights of federal contractors. Current law exempts religious non-profit organizations from federal laws on discrimination.

The proposed rule would expand the religious exemption to any company where the owners claim that their sincerely held religious beliefs would be compromised if they had to comply with certain federal regulations. The rule would also extend to companies the same right currently afforded non-profit religious entities in making hiring and firing decisions.

There is a sound religious liberty principle involved in the proposal. The reason why religious non-profits are allowed these exemptions is to ensure that employees practice fidelity to the tenets of the organization's religion. If they did not, their *raison d'être* would implode. What is the purpose of having a religious non-profit if its mission can be subverted by employees who are hostile to it?

In the private sector, the Trump administration is saying that the religious convictions of the owner should not be forfeited because his organization is a for-profit entity. The Department of Labor quite properly cited the U.S. Supreme Court Hobby Lobby ruling which allowed a for-profit company not to provide for contraceptives in its healthcare plan; the religious convictions of the owner were sustained.

Beginning August 15, the public has a month to comment on the proposal. We did do so.

This is just one more instance where the Trump administration has moved forward extending religious liberty to all Americans.