

# OBAMA URGES CHURCHES TO GET POLITICAL



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new video by President Barack Obama that was cut to launch his “African Americans for Obama” campaign:

It is hardly newsworthy for President Obama to beckon African Americans to support his presidential campaign, but his clarion call to black churches to get on board represents a break with presidential politics: it is a deliberate challenge to the IRS stricture governing the role of religion in politics.

In the video [click [here](#)], President Obama explicitly calls on African Americans to go “to your faith community” to get the word out about his campaign. He even goes so far as to say that “congregation captains” should be organized to accomplish this goal.

This is good news. It means that the IRS harness on the clergy is officially off. Priests can now appoint “congregation captains” who will inform the faithful about attempts by the Obama administration to deny Catholics their First Amendment rights. By formally appealing to their parishioners to mobilize against the ObamaCare legislation, priests will be faithfully implementing the president’s new initiative.

Bishops, of course, will be able to seize on this ground-breaking proposal by asking priests, nuns, brothers, school teachers—lay leaders of every cause—to get the word out about the draconian Health and Human Services edict.

In other words, by undoing the IRS muzzle on black ministers,

Obama has also made it possible for bishops and priests to organize against his war on Catholics with impunity. The timing is auspicious.

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## GEORGE WILL AND JAY CARNEY ARE BOTH WRONG



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks recently made by columnist George Will and White House Press Secretary Jay Carney:

On Sunday, George Will said the following: “The Catholic bishops, it serves them right. They’re the ones who were really hot for ObamaCare, with few exceptions. But they were all in favor of this.”

Yesterday, Jay Carney said: “And I would simply note with regard to the bishops that they never supported healthcare reform to begin with.”

Both men are factually wrong.

Jay Carney needs a history lesson. No institution in American society has supported universal healthcare longer than the Catholic Church; they’ve been pushing for healthcare reform since Carney was riding a tricycle. The first Catholic hospitals in the United States were founded by the Ursuline Sisters in the early eighteenth century—long before the American Revolution—and they served everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. Indeed, the first Catholic hospitals in history were founded in the fourth century, and from the very

beginning they served non-Catholics, such as pagans.

George Will cannot name a single bishop—not one—who backed ObamaCare. On February 27, 2009, just a month after he was inaugurated, President Obama undid a Bush administration rule granting conscience rights to healthcare employees who refuse to take part in abortions. It was that kind of decision that eventually led the bishops to oppose ObamaCare.

The bishops have long championed universal healthcare as an American right. It's just that their idea of caring for people doesn't include killing some of them.

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## OBAMA'S PLOY ADDS INSULT TO INJURY



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on President Obama's revised healthcare plan as it affects Catholic institutions:

President Obama's latest ploy just adds insult to injury. If the insurance plan of a Catholic institution must cover services it deems immoral, then such a healthcare plan is offensive, plain and simple.

The Catholic League, for example, uses Christian Brothers as its insurance carrier. So if a future employee of ours were to demand free abortion-inducing drugs, and she is allowed to request *free* drugs from Christian Brothers, then the rest of us would, in effect, be subsidizing her abortion. This is outrageous and will not stand judicial scrutiny.

When it comes to the First Amendment, there is no such thing as a half loaf. We want now, and in the future, the same rights we have enjoyed since the beginning of the republic.

The Obama ploy is also cynical: its effect is to peel off liberal Catholic opposition to Obamacare. In other words, the old divide and conquer strategy is in play. But it won't work as nicely as they think: there are too many practicing Catholics who will only be impelled to revolt.

Obama has decided to turn up the heat. He'll soon see how hot things get when Catholics team with Protestants, Jews, Mormons and others to recapture their First Amendment rights. Indeed, President Obama will now be remembered as the president who brought the culture war to a boil.

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## SEBELIUS CATHOLICISM

## DISRESPECTS



In an article titled "Our Rule Respects Religion," Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius writes in today's *USA Today* that "we specifically carved out from the [healthcare] policy religious organizations that primarily employ people of their own faith."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds as follows:

Secretary Sebelius knows very well that Catholic agencies have a long and distinguished record of hiring and serving non-Catholics, so to say that they can only qualify for an

exemption by turning away those who are not Catholic from Catholic schools, hospitals, hospices, orphanages, shelters for battered women, and the like, is a plea for *discrimination* and an insult to Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Sebelius is wrong to say that the administration's rule is identical to that of states like California. As Carol Hogan of the California Catholic Conference said last week, her state's rule is not identical. Moreover, in states like Wisconsin, which are weighing various options on extending exemptions to religious entities, they are in a holding pattern until it is clear how Obamacare flushes out nationally.

Sebelius did not address the fact that Obamacare allows at least two religious groups an exemption—the Amish and Christian Scientists. So why does it discriminate against Catholics?

Last week, President Obama said at the National Prayer Breakfast that “We can't leave our values at the door.” Someone needs to tell him that this moral imperative includes Catholics.

*P.S. I just got back from Florida where I received the “Defender of the Faith Award” from Legatus, the group of Catholic CEO's founded by Tom Monaghan. Never before have I seen Catholics as riled up as they are about this unprecedented assault on Catholic civil liberties. Stay tuned for further developments.*

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## 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.

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## OBAMA 'S                      CONTEMPT                      FOR RELIGIOUS   LIBERTY



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on today's announcement from the Obama administration that it is going forward with its original "Obamacare" policy that mandates coverage of sterilization and contraceptive services in most healthcare plans:

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius said today that aside from houses of worship, all other religious agencies and organizations will be required to provide sterilization and contraceptive services, including abortifacients, in their employee healthcare plans; none will be allowed to charge co-pays or deductibles. The policy goes into effect in August 2013 for these entities; all others will be required to provide these services in August 2012.

Sebelius explained how her directive applies to non-church religious entities such as Catholic hospitals and

universities: “Employers wishing to take advantage of the additional year must certify that they qualify for the delayed implementation. This additional year will allow these organizations more time and flexibility to adapt to this new rule.” She also said, “I believe this proposal strikes the appropriate balance between religious freedom and increasing access to important preventive services.”

The language is Orwellian. With stunning magnanimity, Sebelius tells Catholic non-profits that they can take advantage of their one-year reprieve as long as they seek the blessings of the federal government. If they pass muster with the bureaucrats, then they have time to figure out how they can prostitute their religiously ground convictions, or prepare for bankruptcy. To top things off, after shoving the radical secular agenda down the throat of Catholics—and other people of faith who share their concerns—Sebelius congratulates the Obama administration for striking a “balance” between religious liberty and Obamacare. But, of course, no balance was struck: the edict grants nothing to those who believe in religious liberty, and she knows it.

That this dictatorial edict is being announced in an election year indicates both contempt for the First Amendment and plain stupidity.

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## POPE’S OBLIQUE SHOT AT OBAMA

☒ Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on today’s address [to read it click [here](#)] by Pope Benedict XVI to U.S. Bishops on their “Ad Limina” visit:

Without explicitly naming President Barack Obama, Pope Benedict XVI made it clear today that he sees the



administration as a threat to religious liberty. The pope spoke eloquently on the role that religious freedom has played since the founding of America, and of the need for Catholics to follow the natural law. But he also said, "The legitimate separation of Church and State cannot be taken to mean that the Church must be silent on certain issues." Specifically, he called attention to the "grave threats to the Church's public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the political and cultural spheres."

How do we know that the pope was addressing the Obama administration when he cited the threats emanating from the political sphere? Speaking of his discussions with U.S. bishops, the Holy Father said: "Many of you have pointed out that concerted efforts have been made to deny the right of conscientious objection on the part of Catholic individuals and institutions with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices. Others have spoken to me of a worrying tendency to reduce religious freedom to mere freedom of worship without guarantees of respect for freedom of conscience."

Pope Benedict XVI is obviously aware of the public pronouncements of people such as Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan, Bishop William Lori, and others. They have rightfully objected to the Obamacare provisions that would mandate Catholic institutions to provide sterilization and contraceptive services (including abortifacients) without any realistic religious exemption, and of the decision to deny funding to a Catholic agency that combats human trafficking simply because the Church opposes abortion. The term "freedom of worship," which was coined to distinguish it from "freedom of religion," expresses a highly privatized understanding of religious liberty that does not embrace the public expression of religion. It is the preferred term of President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

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# DOUBLING DOWN ON DEATH



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments as follows:

In September, officials at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ended funding to a program operated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) that helps victims of human trafficking. Their decision followed a lawsuit by the ACLU contesting the right of the USCCB not to refer trafficking victims to abortion and contraceptive services. The USCCB maintains that this entire episode evinces an anti-Catholic bias. The Catholic League agrees.

Many HHS career staffers recommended that the USCCB program be funded; they cited scores by an independent review board. But in a highly politicized ruling, Obama appointees rejected the advice of these veteran civil servants.

It is imperative that others follow the lead of disgruntled HHS staffers and contact the HHS Inspector General's office with their complaints [click [here](#)].

This comes on the heels of several assaults on religious liberty. The administration said Obamacare wouldn't threaten religious liberty, yet it wants to mandate that Catholic healthcare providers offer sterilization and contraceptive services. It also showed its stripes when earlier this year it decided it would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act, a bill that defines marriage as being between a man and a woman. And just recently, the administration argued before the Supreme Court that government shouldn't be barred from policing the hiring policies of any church.

The lust for abortion is so thoroughly ingrained with many in the Obama administration that they will use any means possible to force the pro-life community to accept its radical agenda. They must be resisted. At stake is the right of a world religious body to practice its tenets with impunity. Moreover, the campaign to kill babies in the wombs of women who have already been victimized is doubling down on death.

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## OBAMA v. RELIGION

Yesterday, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on a case that involves the “ministerial exception,” a provision that bars the government from making employment decisions regarding a church’s ministers. The position articulated by Leondra R. Kruger, who represented the Obama administration, was the subject of a revealing series of exchanges with the Justices.

After Kruger dodged a pointed question by Chief Justice John Roberts on the specific religious nature of the case—all she would allow was that associational rights were involved—Justice Antonin Scalia pressed her even further: “That’s extraordinary. That’s extraordinary. We are talking here about the Free Exercise Clause and about the Establishment Clause, and you say they have no special application?”

Later, Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan asked Kruger about this same issue. When Kruger indicated that the “ministerial exception” was not grounded in the First Amendment, Kagan, citing Scalia’s concern, said “I too find that amazing, that you think that the Free—neither the Free Exercise Clause nor the Establishment Clause has anything to say about a church’s relationship with its own employees.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments as follows:

Jesus selected only males to be his apostles. Following suit, the Catholic Church selects only males to be its priests. No one has ever questioned this First Amendment right, until now: the Obama administration wants to gut the “ministerial exception” that allows religious institutions to exercise autonomy in its employment decisions.

What happened yesterday is the icing on the cake: after lying to the American people that Obamacare would not threaten the religious prerogatives of the Catholic Church—it now wants to force Catholic healthcare providers to offer sterilization and contraceptive services (abortion will be next)—it says the government should not be barred from policing the hiring policies of any church. Thus has Obama taken the culture war to new extremes.

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## **ANTI-CATHOLICS BASH THE BISHOPS**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a letter recently sent to Kathleen Sebelius, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, by Catholics for Choice and several other organizations:

Catholics for Choice (formerly Catholics for a Free Choice) has teamed up with other anti-Catholics—many of whom have been excommunicated from the Catholic Church—to assail the bishops. What is exercising them now is the determination of the bishops to denounce the anti-Catholic provisions of the Obamacare legislation: the Church leadership is protesting the proposed mandate that Catholic healthcare providers offer

contraceptive and sterilization services (the opt-out stipulations are functionally non-existent).

“As progressive Catholic organizations,” the first sentence of the letter reads, “our social justice tradition compels us to speak out and advocate for the least among us.” But the least among us are the most defenseless among us, namely, the unborn. It is precisely this segment of the population that these people say are not deserving of the right to life.

The letter is published in the dissident weekly, the *National Catholic Reporter*. The headline is revealing: “What the Bishops Won’t Tell You.” In other words, the bishops are lying to Catholics. They go so far as to oppose the most elemental of all civil liberties—the right to conscientiously object, on the basis of religion, to state strictures mandating compliance with acts deemed immoral. The letter even refers to “*burdensome* conscience clauses.” (My italic.)

By pitting themselves against opt-out provisions like conscience clauses, these activists are proving what practicing Catholics have been saying all along: those who want Obamacare want to shove their secular agenda down the throats of the faithful. Nothing bothers them more than diversity—they want a “one size fits all” bill that codifies their politics.

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