

OBAMA MANDATE NEVER SCRUTINIZED



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments as follows:

Following her testimony yesterday before the Senate Finance Committee, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Kathleen Sebelius was asked whether she spoke to the bishops about the controversial mandate she is pushing. She admitted she did not. Then she said, "I know that the president has spoken to the bishops on several occasions."

Sebelius is wrong. Bishop William Lori, who heads the bishops' *Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty*, said this week that administration officials should have sat down with the bishops. "That certainly did not happen," he said. Archbishop Timothy Dolan, who heads the bishops' conference, met once with the president, and that was three months ago; the two phone calls he has had since were to inform him that the bishops' religious liberty concerns would not be honored.

Under questioning from Sen. Orrin Hatch, Sebelius further admitted that HHS never subjected the religious liberty issues to a legal analysis, as requested by 27 senators. She also admitted that she never asked the Justice Department to consider this issue.

It gets worse. Today's *New York Times* reports today that the administration announced the Obama mandate "before it had figured out how to address one conspicuous point: Like most

large employers, many religiously affiliated organizations choose to insure themselves rather than hire an outside company to assume the risk.” As the *Times* points out, this is not a slight issue: 60 percent of all workers with health insurance are covered by a self-funded plan, and the figure jumps to 82 percent for large companies. And no one bothered to address this?

So they refused to consult with the bishops; they refused to weigh the First Amendment religious liberty concerns; and they refused to study how the mandate might impact self-insured companies. In other words, with characteristic arrogance, they just “winged it.” Wait until the Supreme Court hears all of this.

OBAMA SPOKESMEN ARE INSINCERE



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how President Obama’s spokesmen are defending his healthcare plan mandating that Catholic institutions provide for services they deem immoral:

David Axelrod of the Obama campaign said yesterday that “We certainly don’t want to abridge anyone’s religious freedom, so we’re going to look for a way to move forward that both provides women with the preventative care that they need and respects the prerogatives of religious institutions.” Similarly, White House press secretary Jay Carney said yesterday that “the president is very interested in finding the appropriate balance between religious beliefs and convictions.”

Both men are insincere. We know that there was division in the Obama administration when the Obama edict was being contemplated, and that the president sided with extremists like Kathleen Sebelius, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (anyone who raises money for a man dedicated to performing partial-birth abortions is obviously an extremist; she did so for Dr. George Tiller). So they had plenty of time to figure out a way not to punish Catholics, and they still decided to drop the hammer.

White House supporters of Obama's edict are pointing to a poll that shows a slight majority of Catholics supporting Obama's plan. But the poll is flawed. As always, the question affects the outcome. The poll never mentioned that the federal government would place sanctions on Catholic institutions if they did not comply, and that ultimately it could lead to pulling federal funds to Catholic hospitals, effectively shutting them down. Nor did the poll mention that the Obama plan mandates that Catholic entities provide abortion-inducing drugs. In short, the question was dishonest. Just wait until all Catholics find out what's really at stake.

What Obama is doing is just an opening for mandating abortion coverage in every healthcare plan.

**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.

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.

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.

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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CATHOLIC PROFS OBJECT TO BOEHNER

On Saturday, House Speaker John Boehner will give the commencement address at the Catholic University of America. More than 75 professors from Catholic universities have signed a letter expressing their criticism of the Ohio Republican. Former college professor Bill Donohue addresses this issue today:

The anti-Boehner letter alleges that the House Speaker’s “voting record is at variance from one of the Church’s most ancient moral teachings,” namely, support for the poor; it cites the Magisterium of the Church as its contemporary source. It is delightful to learn that all of these professors are now on record expressing fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Despite this breaking news, many concerns loom.

The professor cited as playing the lead role in writing the letter is Stephen F. Schneck of Catholic University. After most Catholics revolted against the Democrats last fall for their disastrous economic record, Schneck wrote that the vote “dealt a blow” to the Church’s concerns for the poor. His conclusion is curious: under the Obama administration, no

segment of the population has been punished more than the poor (the poverty rate climbed to 14.3 percent in 2009, the highest since 1994).

The most oppressed among us are the unborn. Schneek, it should be noted, signed a letter in 2009 praising the nomination of Kathleen Sebelius as the new Secretary of Health and Human Services. She defends the killing of babies who are 80 percent born, was the proud recipient of tens of thousands of dollars from George Tiller, the king of partial-birth abortion, and was openly denounced by the last three archbishops of Kansas City. Moreover, Schneek supported the Obama health care bill over the objections of the bishops. Fidelity anyone?

Rep. John Boehner, on the contrary, is not only pro-life, his support for school vouchers for residents of Washington, D.C. shows his strong commitment to the poor. But he received no support from these “pro poor” professors. The Catholic League is proud of John Boehner, and wants him to know that the carping professors are not representative of Catholic sentiment.

THE WAR ON CATHOLIC HOSPITALS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on attempts to force Catholic hospitals to perform abortions:

For the past six months, the ACLU has been trying to persuade the Obama administration to force Catholic hospitals to perform emergency abortions. It has written to the Department of Health and Human Services, led by pro-abortion zealot Kathleen Sebelius (the good friend of the late partial-birth abortionist George Tiller), asking them to look into this matter; the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are currently considering action against Catholic hospitals. Now the ACLU, to the joy of the *New York Times*, is pressing this

issue again, citing the case of a Phoenix Catholic hospital, St. Joseph's, which recently performed an abortion. The nun who approved the abortion has been excommunicated, and the hospital has been stripped of its Catholic affiliation.

The hero is Phoenix Bishop Thomas Olmsted: he stood on firm civil-rights grounds when he ordered sanctions against those who believe that the unborn have no rights which the born need respect. But, of course, the *New York Times* says the hero is the former Catholic hospital: in today's editorial, it says the hospital made a "commendable decision" by choosing to abort the baby. Disingenuously, the editorial says, "No one has suggested that Catholic hospitals should be required to perform nonemergency abortions." Really? Is there anything in the ACLU's record which suggests it would rally to the defense of Catholic hospitals if the Church amendment (which bars federal agencies from forcing religious hospitals to perform abortions) were repealed?

Where the Obama administration will go with this issue is unclear. But we know that anti-Catholics have been welcome in this administration, and at least one (failed) nominee, Dawn Johnsen, sought to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status. We stand with brave bishops like Thomas Olmsted, encouraging more Catholics to defend their First Amendment right to religious liberty, while standing fast on the rights of all children.

SEBELIUS MISLEADS ON HEALTH BILL

Rep. Bart Stupak and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius appeared on "Good Morning America" today to discuss abortion funding in the health care bill endorsed by President Obama. Stupak maintained that the bill provides for

abortion coverage; Sebelius said it did not.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue shows that Sebelius is wrong:

On December 8, 2009, CNN reported that "The Senate on Tuesday rejected an amendment to tighten restrictions on federal funding for abortion in the sweeping health care bill it is debating." It added that the amendment "mirrored language in the House bill that prevents any health plan receiving federal subsidies from offering coverage of abortion."

On November 5, 2009, the *New York Times* quoted Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe who wrote a memorandum analyzing the House bill. He said that the House bill, "as it currently stands, does not authorize governmental funding of abortion."

Now if the Senate rejected an amendment that "mirrored language in the House bill," and the House bill "does not authorize governmental funding of abortion," then it is obvious that Sebelius misled the nation. And I would add, willfully so.

AMENDMENT TO BAR ABORTION IN HEALTH BILL; OBAMA MUST BACK IT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue offered the following remarks today on the health care bill:

Last week, President Obama said he would not support any health care bill that provided for federal funding of abortion. On Sunday, Secretary of Health and Human Services

Kathleen Sebelius underscored his pledge. Now an amendment that would bar abortion funding from H.R. 3200 has been drafted by Congressmen Bart Stupak and Joe Pitts. On September 10, they sent a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, Chairwoman of the Rules Committee, asking that they allow all members of the U.S. House of Representatives "the right to vote their conscience" on this amendment.

President Obama did not mince words on this subject, and neither did Secretary Sebelius. Accordingly, we look for the president to publicly endorse this amendment, urging Congresswomen Pelosi and Slaughter to facilitate a House vote. This is a critical juncture—the time for the president to deliver on what he pledged is now. The Catholic community, in particular, anxiously awaits his next move.