

THE REAL ISSUE IN THE HHS MANDATE CASE



Bill Donohue comments on an editorial in today's *Los Angeles Times*, and on one that appeared Saturday in the *New York Times*:

The *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* want the U.S. Supreme Court to reject the religious liberty claims put forth by Catholic non-profits challenging the constitutionality of the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate. Both newspapers either underplay or ignore the central issue involved in this case.

The *Los Angeles Times* says the Obama administration "has offered religious schools and charities that object to some birth control methods a reasonable and respectful accommodation." It says they do not have to pay for services they deem objectionable: all they need to do is inform the government of their reservations and let insurance companies and the government take it from there. The *New York Times* says essentially the same thing. But it also slams Catholic organizations for their "well orchestrated assault on the right of women to control their own bodies...."

Both papers miss the central issue involved: The federal government has no legitimate business telling Catholic organizations that hire and/or service non-Catholics that they forfeit their claim as a Catholic entity. The word "catholic"

means universal. Therefore, any Catholic group that discriminates against non-Catholics in their social service programs is in clear violation of the very definition of that term.

The Obama team picked up this pernicious definition of what constitutes a Catholic organization from the ACLU. This is at the heart of the objections by the Little Sisters of the Poor: Preposterous as it sounds, the nuns are declared to be insufficiently Catholic because they do not limit their services to Catholics! This is the real assault on women's rights.

So even if the accommodation were deemed not to be a "substantial burden" on these Catholic groups, the government should have no right to invoke such spurious hiring and servicing criteria in deciding which Catholic groups are legitimate and which are bogus.