

# TRUMP MUST LOCK IN RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

Bill Donohue comments on religious exemptions to federal legislation:

President-elect Donald Trump has pledged to work with people of faith on many matters, and his goodwill is very much appreciated. Among the most pressing issues is the fate of religious exemptions to federal laws.

The Obama administration has waged war on religious institutions in many ways: it has sought to redefine Catholic institutions by forcing them to provide coverage for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans, and has denied funds to Catholic institutions that fight human trafficking (this was payback for opposing abortion). It has also sought to undo legislative provisions that are religion-friendly. Moreover, these attacks have inspired radical secularists to do likewise at the state level.

One of the many ways the Obama administration has sought to undermine religious organizations is to deny the kinds of religious exemptions that have traditionally been granted by previous administrations. Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments is a case in point.

Title IX bars discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance. It explicitly exempts religious organizations. Until Obama took power in 2009, there were few, if any, problems with this provision. The most recent issue is the absence of the religious exemption afforded by Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare.

The problem is not the language of Title IX; rather, it is with the way the language has been twisted by LGBT activists

and government lawyers. For example, the absence of a religious exemption to ObamaCare now means that Catholic non-profits are faced with having to pay for “gender transition services, hormonal treatments, counseling and a host of surgeries that would remove or transform the sexual organs of men or women transitioning to the other gender.” This is madness at any level, never mind forcing religious institutions to honor it.

Similar legislation almost passed in California in September, and attempts to intimidate religious institutions—forcing them to post exemptions from Title IX on their websites—is the subject of a bill introduced by Rep. Katherine Clark of Massachusetts.

Traditional Catholics, evangelicals, observant Jews, as well as many Mormons and Muslims, will be looking to the Trump administration to lock in religious exemptions provided by federal laws. Fortunately, Dr. Tom Price, who has been a strong advocate of religious freedom in Congress, will head the Department of Health and Human Services, the agency that has waged a relentless war on religious institutions.

The Catholic League strongly urges the Trump administration to undo the damage that the Obama administration has done to religious entities.