

65 East Wacker Place • Suite 1620
Chicago, Illinois 60601
(312) 368-1066
FAX (312) 368-1090



108 East Cook Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704
(217) 528-9200
FAX (217) 528-7214

Jan. 31, 2012

To the editor:

Utilizing authority granted to it in President Obama's health care law, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that in one year almost all employers, including religiously affiliated employers, will be forced to offer their employees health insurance that covers sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be forced to include those so-called "preventative services" in the health policies they write, and almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

In so ruling, the federal government's current administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to many people of faith the right of religious liberty. The rule especially targets the Catholic Church, which is the largest institutional Church in the nation and clearly opposes abortion and contraception. By this rule, the government will attempt to compel Catholics institutions to either violate their own teaching, or to drop health coverage for their employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so).

The Bishops have made it clear: the Catholic Church cannot and will not comply with this unjust law. Regardless of how you feel about the Church's teaching on abortion and contraception, you must respect the right of religious institutions and free citizens of faith to hold to those teachings and not be compelled by government order to violate them. This is a matter of grave concern, touching on the very foundations of liberty, and we ask your help.

We ask all people of faith and good will to actively support and do all you can to advance the *Respect for Rights of Conscience Act*. The Act has been introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate as H.R. 1179 and S. 1467. And as the Catholic Church and many other people of faith move forward, exploring all opportunities for overturning this unjust government mandate, we ask you lend your prayers, your voice and your support to this profoundly important cause.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zachary H. Wichmann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Zach Wichmann
Director of Government Relations
Catholic Conference of Illinois
108 E. Cook St., Springfield, IL 62704
217-528-9200
wichmann@catholicconferenceofillinois.org