

THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION



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On the Obama Administration's Abortion Rule

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President Obama's Department of Health and Human Services has issued a requirement that all insurance plans under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), also known as Obamacare, cover free-of-charge certain so-called "contraceptives" that are actually much more than that. Some of the drugs and devices required to be covered will actually cause abortions. The required drugs include Ella and Plan B, both of which can destroy a developing human being prior to, or even after, implanting in the mother's womb. The government requirement also covers IUDs. These devices also prevent fertilized eggs from implanting in the mother's womb. While some, including the Obama administration, call these contraceptives, they are abortifacients. When a developing human being is expelled by direct human action from the mother's womb, that is taking a human life—an abortion.

We consider this callous requirement by the Obama administration to be a clear violation of our nation's commitment to liberty of conscience and a flagrant violation of our constitutional protection to freedom of religion. For many people of faith, this requirement is abhorrent. It forces them to choose between their religious convictions about when human life begins and providing health care for themselves, their families, or their employees. Clearly, the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment protects people from such trampling of their religious convictions. The Obama administration's narrow language that exempts religious organizations like churches from this requirement will not protect other organizations with religious missions, like religiously-affiliated hospitals and religious schools that hire people who may not share their faith convictions. Also, this outrageously narrow exemption will not protect people of faith in the general population who as a matter of religious conviction do not want to cover as part of their health insurance premiums drugs and devices that cause abortion.

The Obama administration's requirement is an affront to all people who are pro-life. On strictly pro-life grounds, people should not be required to violate their deeply held beliefs about abortion. After all, there are those among us who do not believe it is ever right to kill another human being. Our country believes people have a right to such a view. In fact, we provide government exemption from military service on conscience grounds that all killing is immoral. Now the administration is refusing to allow those who believe that abortion is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being to follow faithfully the dictates of his or her conscience on a matter as grave as the death of an unborn child.

The Obama administration's brazen determination to force all Americans to pay for abortions is an affront to our nation's core commitment to liberty of conscience. A person who is not free to follow the dictates of his or her moral conscience is not free. Government has no authority to dictate compliance on matters that do such violence to the consciences of a vast segment of the population. The Obama administration has declared war on religion and freedom of conscience. This must not stand. Our Baptist forebears died and went to prison to secure these freedoms. It is now our calling to stand in the gap and defend our priceless First Amendment religious freedoms.

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