

Women Speak FOR THEMSELVES

“Talking Points” – June 13, 2013

The Government proposed two so-called “compromises,” but neither one gave adequate religious freedom protection.

- The first “compromise” merely extended the date of enforcement for religious organizations. In effect, religious organizations were given one year to figure out how they were going to violate their consciences.
- The second “compromise” very narrowly expanded the definition of a religious organization, but is nearly coextensive with the first regulation. Religious organizations which exist to spread the faith (i.e. Churches)-- when they also do things like serve the poor or educate kids in a religious school--may have the exemption for those ministries as well as the Church itself. Religious institutions who are considered as *not* being primarily in the business of spreading the faith-- likely hospitals, schools, charities, etc.-- can have an exemption after a complicated "self-certification" procedure, but their employees, the employees' daughters (including minors), and students, will get free contraception and “education”--under separate policies issued directly by the insurance company with whom the employer contracts.

The Government is arguing that there is no such thing as a corporation’s conscience. This is a remarkable and remarkably harmful argument. It is also hypocritical.

- First, federal courts have in the past recognized the conscience rights of groups of people gathered together to do business.
- Second, doesn’t the public and even the government HOPE that groups of people sharing a common conscience, will go into business on those terms?! Think of corporations and partnerships with pro-environment or “fair-trade” agendas! Why not an agenda supporting religious freedom? And one supporting the life of vulnerable unborn humans and rejecting the simplistic claim that contraception equals women’s freedom?! No matter people’s particular view on contraception, *the world is very much in need of public witness to the “weight” of sex, to its link with the very existence of human life, and the circumstances into which that new life will be born and nurtured. Women’s health, happiness and freedom are also genuinely compromised when sex is reduced to just another pastime.*

The Government is arguing that forcing institutions to buy or facilitate services to which they conscientiously object is no burden on their religious conscience.

The government contends that only being forced to *buy* or to *use* birth control or abortifacients oneself would constitute a problematic burden on religious freedom. They just don't get it. By forcing religious employers – groups of people employed to carry out a religious mission of service to persons in need – to “get with the government's program/message” (the message that birth control and abortifacients are no different from health care, which cures diseases ... or that women's freedom and women's fertility are “natural enemies”) the government destroys the unique WITNESS that these religious institutions offer not only to their employees and clients, but to the world. Again, religious employers are among the last few witnesses in the world today to the truth of the “weight” of sex, to its link with the very existence of human life, and the circumstances into which that new life will be born and nurtured. Women's health, happiness and freedom are also genuinely compromised when sex is reduced to just another pastime.

Religious freedom is winning this battle in the courts.

According to the [Becket Fund for Religious Liberty](#), to date TWENTY for-profit organizations have secured a temporary injunction (a “stop order”) against the mandate; only SEVEN have not. The 10th Circuit Court of Appeals opted to hear the Hobby Lobby case *en banc* (meaning with the full 9 judges), a judicial move used only in very significant cases. This is all a sign that the courts are taking our religious freedom claims seriously, and that our side is making important and winning arguments.

These are scary times regarding the federal government's powers over our personal lives.

Testimony before Congress in recent days has revealed how ideological federal employees can harass and intimidate ordinary citizens. The HHS Mandate is a perfect example of this phenomenon: extraordinarily ideological bureaucrats and politicians at the White House and the Dept. of Health and Human Services, have needlessly provoked a fight with religious institutions over “free contraception” and early abortifacients, strictly on the basis of an ideology which identifies these as the sum and substance of women's freedom.