

Women Speak FOR THEMSELVES

Talking points: Women and Religious Freedom

1. Religious freedom is significant value for women as well as men. For both sexes, the ability to pursue questions about the meaning of life and one's obligations to a Creator and to fellow human beings – and to order one's life in accord with the answers – are central to a life of integrity, freedom and happiness.
2. Religious freedom may be of particular importance to women because of the crucial role religion plays in providing the rationale for the equality of every human person – made female or male. Historically and currently, the Old Testament's creation accounts, and the New Testament's celebration of women's role in salvation history and of marriage as a sacred and mutual covenant, have provided the leading rationale for the legal and cultural imperative to regard women as fully equal to men, and equally made in God's image.
3. **Data indicate that countries around the world which respect religious freedom are also more likely to recognize the equality of the female half of the human race.** Brian J. Grim and Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied*, Chapter 7
4. It is infuriating that the most recent attacks on religious freedom are launched in the name of women's equality. There is no evidence that big government birth control programs are a boon to women, let alone that they should trump religious freedom. Interest groups currently shouting down religious opposition to the HHS "preventive services" mandate ignore the data showing that such government programs have corresponded with increases – not decreases – in unintended pregnancies, abortions and nonmarital births. All of these outcomes are borne nearly exclusively by women.
5. The mandate covers contraception, abortifacients and surgical sterilization for women, but none for men. The government is facilitating *only* women's ingesting chemicals which have some proven harmful side effects, placing the burden of pregnancy prevention entirely on women.
6. The latest Health and Human Services notice indicates that rather than *allowing* female employees of religious institutions to seek contraceptive coverage, a government-approved entity *will simply provide* it to her and all her female beneficiaries, minor girls included, "automatically" – and without any co-pay to tip off minors' parents. This isn't freedom. This is coercion, along with the undermining of parents' duties and rights respecting their children.