



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 10, 2012

Across USA, Tens of Thousands Gather to Protest Contraception Mandate

Tens of thousands of Christian and pro-life activists gathered in over 160 cities across America on June 8 to take a public stand against President Obama's impending contraception mandate that would require employers to include free contraception in the health insurance they provide their employees. Such contraception would include abortion-causing drugs such as RU-486, referred to by pro-life activists as the "abortion pill." Religious leaders have expressed alarm that the mandate would apply not only to secular businesses, but also to Christian institutions and non-profits, as well as to Christian business owners who are morally opposed to birth control and abortion.



The two groups that organized the rally, the [Pro-Life Action League](#) and [Citizens for a Pro-Life Society](#), explained in a statement that the event, the second of its kind in three months, was meant to send a "clear message to the federal government that it has no business defining the scope of religious ministry," and to make a declaration that "faith-based institutions and even private businesses affected by the mandate will simply not comply with the government's unjust intrusion into the affairs of religion and freedom of conscience."

In Chicago, which organizers called "ground zero" for the nationwide effort, an estimated crowd of 3,500 Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim participants gathered at Federal Plaza, some holding signs bearing messages such as "Keep Your Mandate Off My Rosary." Among the speakers was Rabbi Philip Lefkowitz, chair of the legislative committee of the Chicago Rabbinical Council, who declared that the mandate amounted to "an attack on any religious faith in this country."

In New York City, reported the [National Catholic Register](#), more than 400 participants "braved the heat and humidity to crowd the steps of Federal Hall, the very location where Congress ratified the Bill of Rights 233 years ago and where George Washington was inaugurated as the first president of the United States."

Speakers at the New York rally included Alveda King, niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, who led in the Lord's Prayer before telling attendees that "abortion and contraception are not health care," and challenging them that "this is not the time to go home. This is not the time to give up. We are obligated to tell the truth."

Another speaker, Dr. Anne Nolte, director of the only Catholic health center for women in the city of New York, "used the opportunity to educate the crowd on the facts about birth control," reported [National Catholic Register](#). "According to Nolte, prior to the widespread use of birth control, one out of



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12 women was diagnosed with breast cancer. Today, that number is one in eight.”

Dr. Nolte told the rally participants that “I’m here to dispel the myth that opposition to this mandate is an attack on women. Significant health risks occur from the use of the pill, and bad science is being used to take away our fundamental right to religious freedom.”

Father Frank Pavone of [Priests for Life](#), which organized the New York rally, reminded participants that the Obama mandate is an “assault on the freedom of religion and the freedom of speech granted to all Americans by the First Amendment.” He noted that the Obama administration “is offering some groups a year to ‘adapt’ to the rule. But you don’t ‘adapt’ to injustice. You oppose it. We are opposing it in the courts, because Priests for Life launched the fourth lawsuit against this mandate back in February. We will oppose it also in the streets, as we help to organize and promote these rallies nationwide.”

Kristan Hawkins of [Students for Life](#) told a rally crowd in Washington, D.C. that “the government has taken unprecedented steps in curtailing our most basic freedoms by instituting an unconstitutional mandate that tells us our beliefs and our conscience no longer matter.” She warned that ultimately the mandate will affect “every single American, regardless of their religion or view on abortion-inducing drugs. For if the government can force Americans to choose between violating their [consciences] or paying steep penalties, what religious or ideological demographic will they target next?”

At a rally in Los Angeles, Greg Weiler, president of the St. Thomas More Society of neighboring Orange County, charged that Obama and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, who announced the contraception mandate earlier this year, represent a group of “intellectual elites” who “feel that forcing us to pay for abortions is a good thing.”

Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League and organizer of the Chicago rally, told [OneNewsNow.com](#) that the issue transcends the ObamaCare mandate. “If the United States Supreme Court were to throw out the entire ObamaCare law, then we would be revisiting this issue in the next Congress, and we want it to be very clear to our leaders in Washington that religious freedom must be respected in any future healthcare reform legislation,” he explained.

Scheidler pointed out that ObamaCare — and its contraception mandate — amount to a revenue guarantee for Planned Parenthood, the nation’s premier abortion provider. “Planned Parenthood was included in the first round of healthcare legislation,” he told OneNewsNow, but moving ahead “they are the ones to be excluded, and it’s our august tradition of Christian healthcare that needs to be invited to that table.”

U.S Representative Trent Franks (R-Ariz.), one of the speakers at the Washington, D.C. religious freedom rally, told the [Catholic News Agency](#) that concern by Americans over the contraception mandate would provide momentum beyond the June 8 event. “There are enough people in this country that are committed to the cause of religious freedom,” he said. “They understand that it’s the basis of all other freedoms, and they will not abandon this cause.” He added that being forced to choose between violating their faith and facing government retribution “is simply not going to be something the American people will swallow.”

Photo: Activists gather in Charlotte, N.C.: EWTN's Facebook page



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