



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 2, 2012

Sen. Marco Rubio Sponsors Bill to Block Obama Contraception Mandate

As tension mounts over the Obama administration's ill-advised mandate requiring religious employers to include free contraception in their insurance coverage, one lawmaker is pushing back against the White House with a legislative countermove.

As reported by [TheHill.com](#), on January 30 U.S. Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla., left) introduced the Religious Freedom Restoration Act ([S. 2043](#)), which would block the requirement that religiously affiliated universities, hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions offer health plans that cover birth control — including abortion-causing “contraception” drugs such as RU-486 — without a co-pay or deductible. While churches, synagogues, and other places of worship have been exempted from the ObamaCare mandate, the President has decreed that religious employers must concur, giving them until August 2013 to comply.



“In effect, the President is saying we have a year to figure out how to violate our consciences,” said Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York and president of the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#).

In [announcing the bill](#), Senator Rubio said that President Obama's “obsession with forcing mandates on the American people has now reached a new low by violating the conscience rights and religious liberties of our people. Under this President, we have a government that has grown too big, too costly, and now even more overbearing by forcing religious entities to abandon their beliefs.”

Rubio called his proposed measure a “common-sense bill that simply says the government can't force religious organizations to abandon the fundamental tenets of their faith because the government says so.” Under the legislation, language in Obama's 2010 healthcare law would be amended to stipulate that “no guideline or regulation ... shall require any individual or entity to offer, provide, or purchase coverage for a contraceptive or sterilization service, or related education or counseling, to which that individual or entity is opposed on the basis of religious belief.”

While the contraception mandate impacts all religious employers that do not meet the narrow requirements for exemption, the Catholic Church has taken the lead in opposing the ruling. As reported by [The New American](#), some U.S. bishops have suggested that their dioceses may be forced to resort to civil disobedience. “We cannot — we will not — comply with this unjust law,” read an [open letter](#) signed by at least a half dozen bishops and read at parishes throughout the U.S. on January 29.



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It is not surprising that Rubio — who is a Hispanic Roman Catholic serving a Florida constituency that includes a healthy population of like faith and ethnicity — would take the lead with such a legislative proposal. On January 31 the national [Catholic Association of Latino Leaders](#) (CALL) issued its own strong statement condemning Obama's contraception mandate. "President Barack Obama has not just given the Catholic community a slap in the face," said the group's president, Robert Aguirre. "He is telling Hispanic Catholics to limit our families and forget our religious beliefs."

Morality and faith aside, political observers pointed out that the move by the Obama administration threatens to poison his popularity with Hispanics, who helped to elect him in 2008.

"If ever there was proof that this administration takes the Hispanic vote for granted, it is in this policy so lacking in respect for us, for our faith, and for the religious liberty upon which this country was founded," Maria Suarez Hamm, a member of CALL from Washington D.C., told the [Catholic News Agency](#). "It is an insult to our intelligence to disguise anti-life products as 'healthcare' and then force us to pay for it."

Aguirre said that the President is "telling not just Hispanic Catholics, but all people of faith, that our faith-formed opinions have no place in the public square." He noted that "Hispanics are people of faith and family and these values are as unique as our culture. We believe that family and faith are not to be separated and we deplore in the strongest terms possible this administration's attempt to curb the religious liberty of Hispanic families."

However, it is not just religious organizations that are opposing the immoral ruling. Christian business people note that they are faced with the dilemma of following either the mandate or their religious and moral convictions. Dr. Michael Ebertz, who operates five dermatology clinics in Minneapolis, told the Catholic News Agency that he sees the Obama move as "a direct attack on the tenets of our faith and our individual freedoms and liberties." He said that he is faced with either resorting to civil disobedience by not following the ObamaCare mandate, or, perhaps, dissolving his business and putting many employees out of work. "I'm really at a very difficult crossroads," he said.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration is treating its mandate as standard government procedure, insisting that it in no way tramples upon the constitutionally protected rights of Americans. "I don't believe there are any constitutional rights issues here," a poker-faced White House Press Secretary Jay Carney told reporters asking about the mandate January 31. "The administration believes that this proposal strikes the appropriate balance between respecting religious beliefs and increasing access to important preventative services."

In fact, Carney added, to the incredulity of the assembled journalists, "I would also just note that our robust partnerships with the Catholic Church and other communities of faith will continue."



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