



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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TALKING POINTS on FEDERAL CONTRACEPTION/STERILIZATION MANDATE

- The contraceptive mandate imposed on health plans by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) violates freedom of conscience, which is guaranteed by the First Amendment and several federal laws. The Bill of Rights says we are free to live by our religious beliefs. Forcing all of us to buy coverage for sterilization and contraceptives, including drugs that induce abortion, is **a radical incursion into freedom of conscience.**
- **Never before in U.S. history has the federal government forced citizens to directly purchase what violates their beliefs.** The Supreme Court recently declared in the Hosanna-Tabor case that the Constitution gives a priority place to Freedom of Religion.
- HHS created this mandate after Congress asked it to develop a list of services all health plans should provide without co-pay. Instead of keeping with the prevention of diseases like breast cancer, sexually transmitted diseases and gestational diabetes, **HHS took it upon itself to include sterilizations, contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs.**
- **Even states with similar mandates have a broader conscience exemption,** or at least allow employers to self-insure or to choose a plan without prescription drug coverage if they have a conscientious objection to underwriting abortion, contraceptive and sterilization. This mandate **forces virtually all insurance plans** to offer such services.
- **If the Administration will not rescind this violation of the First Amendment, Congress must do so.**

For more resources on Conscience Protection, including a video by USCCB President, Cardinal-designate Dolan, visit www.usccb.org/conscience.