



## **ERLC urges HHS to provide a true religious liberty exemption to the preventive care mandate**

**Southern Baptists believe all human beings are created in the image of God and must be treated accordingly, no matter the stage of life.** The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in a 2015 resolution recognized that God is the author of life, “from the moment of conception until natural death.” In view of this, ERLC remains deeply concerned about the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) preventive care mandate, whereby the government bullies people of deep convictions to violate their beliefs in order to achieve government policy.

**The federal government is required by the U.S. Constitution to safeguard religious freedom for all.** Trampling the consciences of people of faith—such as the Little Sisters of the Poor, who serve the most vulnerable with love and compassion—hurts society and violates fundamental American principles. The Constitution safeguards the consciences of the governed, and federal regulations should reflect this constraint on government.

**ERLC supports exemptions for both religious and moral objectors from the HHS preventive care mandate.** At the founding of our country, James Madison wrote, “Conscience is the most sacred of all property.” Regardless of the source of the conviction, whether religious or moral, the Constitution guarantees the protection of the conscience.

**Contraception will remain widely and readily available to those who seek it.** Those employed by religious organizations and faith-based universities usually share the organization's religious convictions. Those who disagree with their employer's religious or moral sentiments still have access to federal, state, and local programs that provide free or subsidized contraception, or can purchase contraception from local drugstores at a minimal cost.

**It is time for HHS to provide true religious and moral exemptions to the unconstitutional preventive care mandate.** Three years have passed since the Supreme Court decided in *Zubik v. Burwell* that mandated coverage of certain preventive services under the Affordable Care Act was unconstitutional. In spite of this decision, HHS did not provide a legitimate accommodation for people of faith. Now is the time for HHS to end the unconstitutional mandate and make an exemption covering those with religious and moral objections.

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