



## DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

January 25, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced last week that almost all employers, *including Catholic employers*, will be *forced* to offer their employees' health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception. Almost all health insurers will be *forced* to include those "services" in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be *forced* to buy that coverage as a part of their policies.

And therefore, I would ask of you two things. First, as a community of faith we must commit ourselves to prayer and fasting so that wisdom and justice may prevail, and religious liberty may be restored. Second, visit [www.usccb.org/conscience](http://www.usccb.org/conscience), to learn more about this severe assault on religious liberty, and how to contact Congress in support of legislation that would reverse the Administration's decision.

This is an alarming matter that negatively impacts the Church in the United States directly. It strikes at the fundamental right to religious liberty for all citizens of any faith. The federal government, which claims to be "of, by, and for the people," has just dealt a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people—the Catholic population—and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful.

In so ruling, the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty. And as a result, unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled either to violate our consciences or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). The Administration's sole concession was to give our institutions one year to comply.

This unjust law cannot stand. People of faith cannot be made second class citizens. We are already joined by our brothers and sisters of all faiths and many others of good will in this important effort to regain our religious freedom. Please pray. Please contact your Congressional Representatives.

Respectfully,

+Jaime Soto  
Bishop of Sacramento