

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 8, 2012

Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write today to request that you rescind the final rule recently announced by the Department of Health and Human Services relating to Coverage of Preventive Services under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). On January 20, 2012, your administration announced that it would not expand the definition of a "religious employer" to exempt all faith-based institutions from the mandate to provide contraceptive services established under PPACA. While I understand the final rule does allow for a one-year delay in implementation for non-profit organizations that do not currently cover contraception, I believe this mandate is an egregious violation of both the deeply held religious convictions of millions of Americans and the right of religious liberty guaranteed by the First Amendment.

As a result of your administration's ruling, faith-based institutions, such as the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, are forced to either abandon the fundamental tenets of their faith and pay for health insurance that covers abortion inducing drugs and sterilization procedures or refuse to comply and pay a penalty. Whatever you think of their beliefs, forcing such a choice on any organization or individual is a blatant assault on their right of conscience and a clear violation of religious freedom.

The decisions required by this rule extend beyond a single religious denomination. A wide variety of religious institutions and organizations will resist providing insurance coverage for birth control. The one-year delay in enforcement is simply not an acceptable solution and does not address the clear constitutional violation.

Furthermore, I fear that these types of federal actions will threaten the good work being done by faith-based groups, nonprofits, hospitals and charities. This administration should be fostering a stronger relationship with these organizations – especially during these tough economic times when so many are hurting across the country – rather than forcing Americans to compromise their faith.

Religious liberty – a core American principle – has been sustained for over 200 years and must continue to be protected. I urge you to withdraw this ruling and extend the religious employer exemption to any entity, employer or individual that has a moral or religious objection to ensure that religious and conscience freedoms are preserved.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Coats". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D".

Dan Coats
U.S. Senator