

January 28/29, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you concerning an alarming and serious matter that negatively and directly impacts the Catholic Church in the United States, and that 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 us and almost a quarter of those people – the Catholic population – and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful.

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. *Never before in the history of our Nation have citizens been forced to directly purchase something that violates their consciences.*

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. We cannot – and will not – comply with this unjust law.

We in Connecticut are no strangers to attacks on our religious liberty. As you recall, in 2008, the Connecticut State Legislature attempted to reorganize the Catholic Church in Connecticut, a move that would have effectively separated Pastors from their people. Just months later, the Office of State Ethics attempted to silence the Diocese of Bridgeport from publicly making its voice heard in defense of its rights. Our collective voice was heard, and because of our public witness, these attacks on our rights were successfully defeated.

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Now, on a national level, we must again join together to defend against this new attack our religious liberty. Therefore, I would ask of you two things. **First**, we must pray ardently that wisdom and justice will prevail, and that religious liberty will be restored. **Second**, please visit 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.

The specific contact information for our Connecticut Senators and Representatives is:

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman: (202) 224-4041
or by email: <http://www.lieberman.senate.gov>

Senator Richard Blumenthal: (202) 224-2823
or by email: <http://www.blumenthal.senate.gov/contact>

Representative Rosa L. DeLauro: (202)-225-3661
or by email: http://delauro.house.gov/contact_form_email.cfm

Representative Jim Himes: (202)-225-5541
or by email: <http://himes.house.gov/content/contact-me>

Representative Chris Murphy: (202)-225-4476
or by email: https://forms.house.gov/chrimurphy/webforms/issue_subscribe.htm

It's been said that all it will take for evil to prevail is for good people to be silent. Let us not be silent in the face of such an outrageous attack on our rights. Let us make no mistake: the future of our freedoms in our beloved republic is threatened now as never before.

Let us stand together in prayer and in our resolve in this decisive hour.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Bishop of Bridgeport