

January 3, 2014

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Majority Leader
H-329, The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Cantor:

We, the undersigned representing millions of Americans, strongly support enactment of protections for religious liberty and freedom of conscience. We thank you for your efforts to protect these fundamental rights of all Americans most recently on a Continuing Resolution that passed the House on September 28th, but failed in the Senate. The danger to religious freedom because of the Affordable Care Act's Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate continues for businesses such as Hobby Lobby, Autocam, Conestoga Wood Specialties and Eden Foods. The mandate also threatens non-profit religious organizations such as the Little Sisters of the Poor, Wheaton College and the University of Notre Dame, as well as individual Americans. Now that Congress has passed a budget and spending bills will be considered prior to January 15, we urge you to attach conscience protections to any omnibus to protect religious freedoms for all Americans.

The First Amendment is endangered by the HHS mandate because that mandate will force religious and other non-profit entities, among others, to violate their conscience in their health coverage, or face steep fines and other penalties for offering a noncompliant health plan. The penalties for noncompliance could force employers to stop offering health coverage for their employees and their families altogether rather than submit to intrusive federal mandates. The mandate exempts churches, but not other religious entities such as charities, hospitals, schools, health care providers or individuals. Through this mandate the government is dictating which religious groups and individuals are, and are not, "religious enough" to have their fundamental freedoms respected. We believe this policy constitutes a fundamental breach of the Constitution's religious freedom protections as well as the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Recent polling shows that 59% of likely voters oppose the HHS mandate, including 54% of women ages 18-45 and 61% of independents. Every American, including job creators, should be free to live and work according to his or her religious beliefs, but the HHS mandate demands that Americans comply and violate their principles or stand up for their First Amendment rights and be punished.

To protect the religious freedom of Americans from the HHS mandate, Members of Congress led by Rep. Diane Black, R.N., Rep. John Fleming, M.D., and Rep. Jeff Fortenberry have introduced the “Health Care Conscience Rights Act” (H.R. 940). Respecting the freedom of conscience is a long-held American tradition, and the government should not impose mandates or laws that force individuals and businesses to violate these beliefs just to hold a job, own a business, or have health insurance.

We urge you to include conscience protections like those in H.R. 940 in any omnibus spending bill to restore respect for conscience in health care.

Respectfully,

Tony Perkins, President
Family Research Council

Brian Brown, President
National Organization for Marriage

Penny Nance, President and CEO
Concerned Women for America

C. Preston Noell III, President
Tradition, Family, Property, Inc.

P. George Tryfiates
Director of Government Affairs
Association of Christian Schools International

David Fowler, J.D., President
Family Action of Tennessee, Inc.

Len Deo, Founder & President
New Jersey Family Policy Council

Q Rim, Executive Director
New Jersey Family First

Gary Bauer, President
American Values

Julaine K. Appling, President
Wisconsin Family Action

Jayd Henricks, Executive Director
Office of Government Relations
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Tom McClusky, VP of Government Affairs
March for Life Education & Defense
Association

J. Michael Smith, Esq., President
Home School Legal Defense Association

Dr. Charmaine Yoest, President & CEO
Americans United for Life

Kris Mineau, President
Massachusetts Family Institute

Phil Burress, President
Citizens for Community Values Action

Nicole Theis, President
Delaware Family Policy Council

Carroll Conley, Executive Director
Christian Civic League of Maine

Keith Weibe, President
American Association of Christian Schools

Cathi Herrod, President
Center for Arizona Policy

Kent Ostrander, Executive Director
The Family Foundation (KY)

Robert Noland, Executive Director
Kansas Family Policy Council

Helen Alvare, Professor of Law
George Mason University School of Law and
Founder, Women Speak for Themselves

Mathew Staver, Chairman
Liberty Counsel Action

Robert K. Fischer, President
Fischer Furniture, Inc.

Morton Blackwell, Chairman
The Weyrich Lunch

Carrie Gordon Earll, Senior Policy Director
Focus on the Family

Jim Backlin
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Judson Phillips, Founder
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Michael Geer
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Tom Minnery, President & CEO
CitizenLink

Marion D. Boteju
Executive Director
American Principles Project

Victoria Cobb
President
The Family Foundation of Virginia

cc:

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Majority Whip

The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Jack Kingston, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee

The Honorable Joe Pitts, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health