

## **Missouri Synod president says church remains ‘deeply concerned’ about health plan mandate despite White House statement**

ST. LOUIS—February 14, 2012—The Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, issued a statement today in response to President Obama’s health plan “accommodation” for religious groups, which was announced last week:

“In response to President Obama’s announcement Friday concerning an ‘accommodation’ to a previous mandate that health plans must cover all forms of birth control (even those that can kill the unborn), The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) remains deeply concerned. We strongly object to the use of drugs and procedures that are used to take the lives of unborn children, who are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception. Drugs such as ‘Plan B’ and ‘Ella,’ which are still included in the mandate, can work post-conception to cause the death of the developing child, so don’t be fooled by statements to the contrary.

“We see President Obama’s action Friday as significant, in that it appears to have been prompted by the many voices united in concern over an infringement of our religious liberties. But the ‘accommodation’ did not expand the exemption for religious employers, nor did it restrict the mandate in any way. It simply described a temporary enforcement delay and a possible future change—a change that, unfortunately, would not adequately protect religious freedom or unborn lives.

“We remain opposed to this mandate because it runs counter to the biblical truth of the sanctity of human life. We are committed to working to ensure that we remain free to practice the teachings of our faith, that our religious rights are not violated, and that our rights of conscience are retained. Freedom of religion extends beyond the practice of our faith in houses of worship. We must be free to put our faith into action in the public square, and, in response to Christ’s call, demonstrate His mercy through our love and compassion for all people according to the clear mandate of Holy Scripture.

“The government has overstepped its bounds. This controversy is not merely about ‘birth control’ and the Catholic Church’s views about it. It’s about mandating that we provide medications which kill life in the womb. And moreover, and perhaps even more ominous, it is about an overzealous government forcing coercive provisions that violate the consciences and rights of its citizens. We can no longer expect a favored position for Christianity in this country. But we can, as citizens of this great nation, fight for constitutional sanity against secularizing forces. As we have vividly experienced in discriminatory state legislation with respect to homosexual adoption, we, and our institutions (and those of other religious citizens of good will), are being robbed of the right to the free exercise of religion absent government intrusion or threat. The next assault will come upon church-related retirement facilities. How much longer will it be legal in this country to believe and act according to the dictates of biblical and creedal Christianity?

“Jesus bids us, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's’ (Mark 12:17). We will pray for and support our government where we can, but our consciences and lives belong to God.”

