

“Conscience” Rule Rolling Away. Just Do Your Job!

Posted By [JAZZ SHAW](#), Assistant Editor On March 2, 2009 @ 1:09 pm

The [1] [LA Times](#) reports that President Obama is looking into rolling back the annoying and politically motivated “Conscience Rule” signed by President Bush at the end of his last term. The rule didn’t only apply to doctors performing abortions, but to a wide range of health care workers, allowing them to refuse to provide counseling regarding abortion as an option, the dispensing of birth control pills, emergency contraception and related products if their pro-choice leanings made them uncomfortable with doing so.

Contrary to some of the headlines running around the web thus far, Obama has not taken any action yet. More study is required.

*On Thursday officials stressed that before the administration finalizes the rollback, **a standard 30-day comment period seeks input from people across the ideological spectrum.***

“We believe that this is a complex issue that requires a thoughtful process where all voices can be heard,” said one official, who was not authorized to speak on the record about the policy change.

The officials said the administration would consider drafting a new rule to clarify what healthcare workers could reasonably refuse to do for their patients.

On one hand, I have to agree with Ed Morrissey, [2] [who points out](#) that Bush’s rule never had a lot of force and is easily overturned by the new administration. It was left behind by Bush as a sort of “poison pill” just to force Obama to take an action early in his administration which would drive a wedge further into the nation on this issue for political gain. As to the practical effects of the rule as it applies to workers and patients, however, there will be a parting of the ways here.

Still, this rollback says something about the Obama administration’s priorities. While the freedom of religion is explicitly guaranteed in the Constitution, the Roe right to an abortion is implied through emanations and penumbras — but the Obama administration appears more concerned with the latter than the former. Patients who don’t like doctors who won’t discuss abortion or prescribe contraception can see another doctor; they can also find another pharmacist if the neighborhood pharmacy won’t fill a prescription for the Pill. The free market works out those issues on its own without government sticking its nose into it and forcing providers to violate their religious tenets to stay in business.

From strict, rote recitation, Ed is correct about some of the rights of patients. What he neglects to mention is that the free market provides an equal amount of rights and opportunities to the health care workers. They have the right to **do their damned jobs** or, if their conscience doesn’t permit it, to *go seek work elsewhere* or perhaps even in an entirely different line of work.

If you happen to be **the owner** of a small, family run pharmacy, and you don’t want to carry birth control pills, condoms or related products, that’s your business. Local doctors can quickly inform patients of that fact and they can take all of their business elsewhere. If you **work for** a pharmacy which does carry those products as part of their business model and potential profits, then you can either sell them or you were very foolish in choosing where to apply for a job. If somebody comes up to the counter with a six-pack of Dr. Pepper and you happen to prefer Mr. Pibb, you sell them the product or you get fired. It’s as simple as that.

I have to wonder how much support the various, pro-life, anti-union conservatives would have for workers who refuse to sell other products or perform other services based on their own preferences? Yes, the workers have freedoms. And, again, those include the freedom to go find a different job if their sense of moral superiority dictates that they can’t perform all of the functions they signed on to do.

UPDATE: From my e-mail in basket.

Isn’t it interesting how suddenly conservative Republicans are fine with the Federal Government telling businesses (e.g., hospitals and pharmacies) how to operate their business and handle their employees. I have to wonder... if my job is working at a garage and I refuse to do tune-ups on SUVs because they harm the environment and use too much gas, would they support the government telling my boss he can’t fire me over my moral principles?

An interesting question indeed.

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