

Obama: To Hell With Catholics

By Dr. PAUL KENGOR
Center for Vision & Values
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America's Catholic bishops are princes of diplomacy, highly educated, erudite, men of tact, propriety. They're asked to shepherd the flock with a long historical timeframe — like, say, eternity. They tend not to have knee-jerk reactions to issues of the moment.

And so, it's not often when a paragon of decorum, namely, Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik, publishes a letter in his diocesan newspaper with a title like, "To hell with you."

Gee, what could have provoked that? The answer is the Obama administration via its horrendous mandate to Catholic institutions to provide contraceptives, sterilization, and abortifacients — that is, birth-control drugs that induce abortion. The Catholic Church defines these things as "evil." The Church and its members are

now being told they must provide them. By fiat, the Obama administration has issued that decree.

It sort of flies in the face of that old freedom of religion thing we've always had in America. And it's certainly of concern not merely to Catholics but all Americans.

Here's what happened: Last August, the Obama administration's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued guidelines for implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as, "Obama-care."

The guidelines mandated that by summer 2012 all health-insurance plans — yes, all of them — must cover any and all FDA-approved contraception, sterilization procedures, and pharmaceuticals, even those that produce or result in abortion.

Every employer and employee must pay for these things, even if they violate the dictates of their conscience. The employers in-

clude all Catholic institutions, from colleges to hospitals to nursing homes to social-service agencies to charities ... to whatever else. "All" means "all."

How's that for social justice? When ex-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., a lifetime Roman Catholic, said that we'll learn the details of Obama-care after Congress passes the legislation, this is a perfect illustration. The Devil is truly in the details.

In response to this screaming trainwreck, Catholics sent letters to Kathleen Sebelius, HHS secretary, who happens to be Roman Catholic. When she was governor of Kansas, Sebelius was so terrible on abortion, and so defiant of Church teaching, that her bishop ordered that she be denied Communion. Catholics protested directly to Sebelius.

On Jan. 20, Sebelius and Barack Obama answered Catholics. As Bishop Zubik put it, "On Jan. 20, the Obama administration

answered you and me. The response was very simple: 'To hell with you.'"

Zubik writes: "This is government by fiat that attacks the rights of everyone ... At no other time in memory or history has there been such a governmental intrusion on freedom.... It undermines the whole concept and hope for health care reform by inextricably linking it to the zealotry of pro-abortion bureaucrats. The mandate would require the Catholic Church as an employer to violate its fundamental beliefs concerning human life and human dignity.... It is really hard to believe that it happened."

All of the bishops are frustrated. Bishop Timothy Dolan of New York said that the Obama administration has basically told American Catholics that they have one year "to figure out how to violate our consciences."

In Phoenix, Bishop Thomas Olmsted appeared to urge civil disobedience. In a letter read to every church in his diocese,

Olmsted wrote: "Unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled to either violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees (and suffer the penalties for doing so). We cannot — we will not — comply with this unjust law."

Also vowing non-compliance is Bishop David Ricken of Green Bay and Archbishop Dennis Schnurr of Cincinnati. LifeNews.com reports that 86 bishops (thus far) have spoken against the mandate.

The Obama administration has forced the bishops' hand. President Obama and Secretary Sebelius are not backing down. They are true believers.

Where are liberals on this issue? We know they support the so-called "right to choose," politically sanctified by *Roe v. Wade* in Jan. 1973. But the Constitution predates *Roe* by a good 200 years. The First Amendment that begins the Bill of Rights starts with religious freedom.

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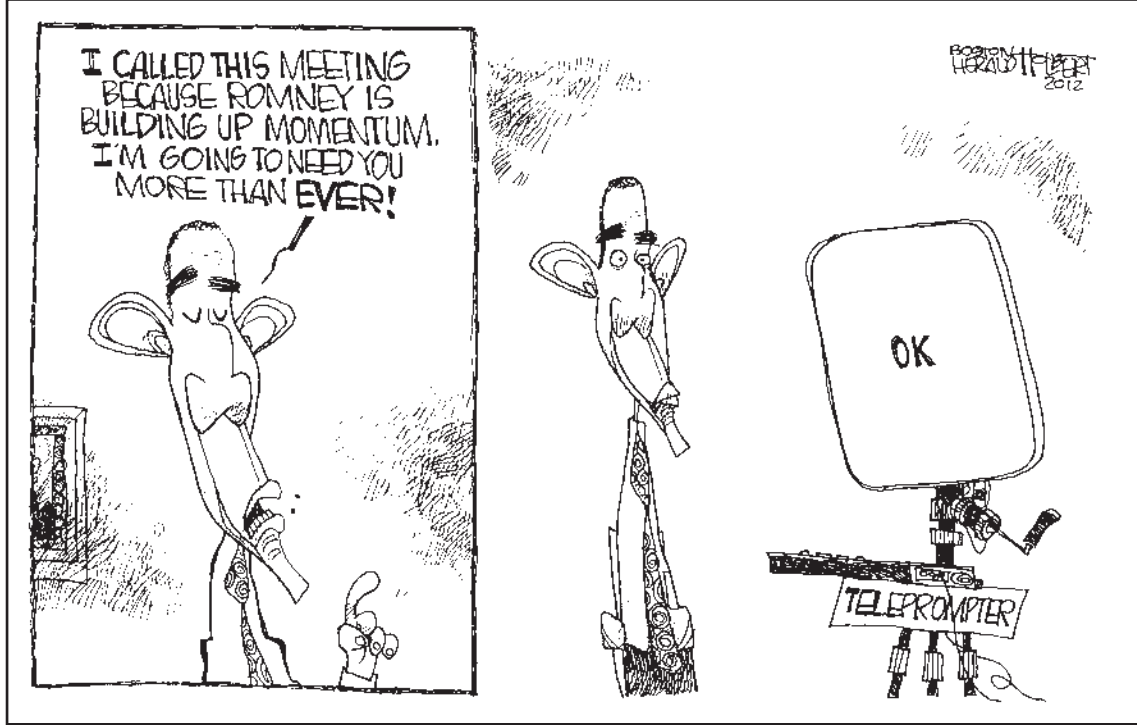
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Thought for Today

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Hebrews 10:26



Our Readers Say

Kingston: Reform Taxes

EDITOR, Journal-Herald:
President Obama delivered his third State of the Union Address during a joint session of Congress last Tuesday. These are always inspiring events with the House and Senate united in welcoming the President, his cabinet, the justices of the Supreme Court and leaders of our nation's military. Tackling the challenges facing our country, however, will take more than words or pomp and circumstance. The real test is not what was said Tuesday night but what can be accomplished in the days ahead.



Kingston

I appreciate the president outlining his agenda. I was encouraged to hear him endorse educational flexibility and his announced intentions to repeal overly burdensome regulations. Some of the items he laid out have already been passed by the House but have been stalled in the Senate. I hope the president's words will encourage the Senate to take them up.

I was also encouraged to hear the President endorse an all-of-the-above energy strategy. A good place to start would be reversing his misguided decision to block the Keystone XL pipeline that could increase our access to energy resources from Canada as opposed to more hostile nations like Venezuela and those in the Middle East. He could also encourage the Senate to quit blocking House-passed bills to increase domestic energy production.

In his speech, the president called for us to "turn our unemployment system into a re-employment system that puts people back to work." I could not agree more which is why I have voted for several reforms to the unemployment insurance system that bring it back in line with its historic role of being a bridge to re-employment.

That's also why I introduced the "Ensuring Quality in the Unemployment Insurance Program" (EQUIP) Act which would require drug screening as a condition for unemployment benefits. For many jobs, drug use is a disqualification for employment and I see no reason we should pay someone who renders themselves ineligible for work.

Of concern to me is the number of tax credits proposed in the speech. No matter how well-intentioned, tax credits are the genesis of loopholes. Before you know it, only those with armies of lawyers and accountants can benefit from them while the rest of us foot the bill.

Instead of more loopholes and deductions, I believe we should move in the direction of tax simplification. While I have co-sponsored the Fair Tax, I believe any proposal that makes our tax code fairer, flatter and more conducive to growth merits discussion.

Reforming our tax code is essential to reigniting the American economy — one Harvard economist estimated it could help us grow by as much as \$5 trillion!

Where we can find common ground, I look forward to working with the president to advance policies that will put our country back to work and create a brighter future for generations to come. Where he or others cling to failed policies or to the politics of division, I will continue to advance alternatives that will help restore the American dream.

The Department of Defense has announced a dramatic reshaping of the military with significant budget cuts to achieve almost \$500 billion in savings over the next decade.

While I have some serious concerns, I want to work with the Secretary of Defense to ensure that any reductions are implemented in a manner that will not erode our national security or further endanger our troops. I will also continue fighting for new missions for the military installations in our district to promote their continued vitality and long-term strength.

U.S. Rep. Jack Kingston
First Congressional District
Washington, D.C.

Attend Church Sunday!

EDITOR, Journal-Herald:
Have you been working all week to take care of your family and/or yourself? Now it's the weekend. Sunday is coming up! Get right with God!

Take your family to church this Sunday. Three quarters of the churches are one-half full in our community. No one wants to burn in hell. Come on! Make sure your family goes to heaven. Come to church this Sunday.

Benny Perkins
Waycross

Vietnam Vets Thanked

EDITOR, Journal-Herald:
A guy gets time to think over here in Iraq and I was thinking about all the support we get from home.

Sometimes it's overwhelming. We get care packages at times faster than we can use them. There are boxes and boxes of toiletries and snacks lining the center of every tent; the generosity has been amazing.

So, I was pondering the question: "Why do we have so much support?" In my opinion, it all comes down to one thing: Vietnam veterans.

We treated them so poorly back then. The stories are nightmarish of what our returning warriors were subjected to. It is a national scar, a blemish on our country, an embarrassment to all of us.

After Vietnam, it had time to sink in. The guilt in our collective consciousness grew. It shamed us.

Starting during the Gulf War, when the first real opportunity arose to stand up and support our troops, we did. We did it to support our friends and family going off to war.

But we also did it to right the wrongs from the Vietnam era. We treat our troops of today like the heroes they are, acknowledge and celebrate their sacrifice and rejoice at their homecoming, instead of spitting on them.

The lesson was learned in Vietnam and we are all better because of it. Everyone who has gone before is a hero. They are celebrated in my heart. When I get back home, I'm going to make it a personal mission to thank every Vietnam vet I encounter for their sacrifice.

Because if nothing else good came from that terrible war, one thing did. It was the lesson learned on how we treat our warriors. I am the beneficiary of their sacrifice. Not only for the freedom they, like veterans from other wars, ensured, but for how well our country now treats my fellow Marines and me.

Maj. Brian P. Bresnahan,
USMC, Iraq

EDITOR'S NOTE: This letter originally appeared in the *Disabled American Veterans* magazine. It was forwarded to the *Journal-Herald* by Sgt. Larry Hayes of *Blackshear*, who served with the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. "It blessed my heart," Hayes said of Maj. Bresnahan's letter.

SB-301 Permits Silencers

The *Macon Telegraph* reported that the bill to his Senate colleagues (SB-301 passed 48-5). The hogs run in packs and would reduce law enforcement areas. Many rural areas employ casual laborers. In Arizona there is a lot of hunting. Sen. John Bulloch, R-Ochlocknee, sponsor of SB-301 gave a different reason when

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Show Some Class, Newt

The *Augusta Chronicle*

The biggest difference between Barack Obama and Newt Gingrich, other than where they'd take America, is how they handle grudges.

Both men hold a grudge as tightly as a squirrel gripping an acorn in winter. It's just that Mr. Obama is adept at keeping his grudges from public view, most of the time — his infamous airport run-in with Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer notwithstanding.



Gingrich

Mr. Gingrich, on the other hand, can't help himself. Literally.

After winning the South Carolina primary, he was all flowers and sunshine toward his primary opponents. But then, it's easy to be Mr. Magnanimous when you win.

Tuesday night, after losing Florida big to Mitt Romney, Gingrich's concession speech snarled toward the "Massachusetts moderate"; there was no public nod to the winner; and there was no private phone call either, apparently.

"Newt Gingrich loses Florida — and reminds us why," was Jennifer Rubin's take

in *The Washington Post*.

The man who embraces big ideas just made himself look very small. This is what we're left with? A grudge match to the end?

Like Gingrich, we regret the tone of the campaign; one source reported 92 percent of the broadcast ads in the Florida primary were negative. We wish people weren't swayed by them, but they are.

But we also don't need another president who clings so tightly to perceived grievances. Show some class.

About Letters

Letters policy: We often condense letters. Most, as published, won't exceed 400 words. A letter MUST include the writer's name (including signature), which will be published, and an address and phone number for verification, which will not be published.

Writers may be limited to one letter every 30 days. Open letters and poetry are not accepted.

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