



## **Catholic Groups File Suit Over Contraceptive Mandate**

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Forty-three Roman Catholic institutions – including the University of Notre Dame – and 13 dioceses sued the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) this week in an effort to halt the implementation of a rule requiring religious employers to cover contraception in workers' health plans.

All told, the groups filed 12 lawsuits in federal districts across the country claiming the mandate violates the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty.

At issue is a rule contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) requiring most employers to cover preventive health services as part of their insurance policies – a rule the Archdiocese of Washington calls an “unprecedented mandate dramatically redefining religious ministry.”

In February, the Obama Administration agreed to modify the rule to allow Catholic employers to avoid directly providing contraceptives. Instead, insurance companies would be required to provide the contraceptives without charging the employer or the worker.

However, HHS has not decided how that rule would be implemented, which could pose a timing problem for the Catholic groups' lawsuits. Ultimately, courts could decide that the rule must be finalized before it can be challenged in court.

The lawsuit comes on the heels of announcements that Catholic universities Ave Maria University and Franciscan University would drop its student health insurance plan, citing the moral and economic difficulties associated with the contraceptive coverage mandate.