

LINCOLN, NE -- Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today commented on the new Department of Health and Human Services rule that would force every American to pay for coverage for abortifacient drugs, sterilizations, and other ethically divisive procedures that have traditionally been considered electives. This mandate affects doctors, nurses, hospitals, insurance carriers, small businesses that provide insurance for their employees, and individuals with health insurance.

"President Obama and Secretary Sebelius are using health care for their political and ideological agenda," said Fortenberry. "Americans should not be forced by the strong arm of government to pay for drugs and procedures that are not medical necessities and unrelated to America's health care challenges. This mandate drives up health care costs and is perniciously targeted at religious providers, who selflessly and compassionately serve the poorest and most vulnerable. Under this rule, within the year, religiously-affiliated medical providers would have to fire and refuse to treat persons of other faiths in order to uphold their own deeply-held beliefs—or be forced, by order of Secretary Sebelius, to close their doors rather than violate tenets of their religion. This is forced discrimination. This is wrong. No American should be forced to choose between their faith and their job.

"This Administration's conception of religious liberty is so far out of the mainstream that all nine Supreme Court justices ruled against it just days ago. Yet rather than adopt the wisdom of the Court's unanimous decision, the Administration moves to further suppress religious liberties in a politically-calculated decision just days before the nation's largest gathering of pro-life youth in Washington."

To help allow health providers to continue to serve their communities, Fortenberry authored the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act. This bipartisan piece of legislation would repeal this mandate, amending the 2010 health care law to preserve conscience rights for health care professionals, their patients, and the institutional health care providers that serve them.

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