

DOJ to SCOTUS: Nuns Must Violate Faith or Pay Fines

Washington, D.C. – The Department of Justice filed their response this morning to Justice Sotomayor’s 11th hour emergency injunction protecting the Little Sisters of the Poor, a religious order of nuns who take care of the needy and dying elderly (see *video*), against the controversial HHS mandate. The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, representing the nuns, issues the following statement, and will held a **press conference at 1:30pm EST to discuss** the legal issues and take questions from members of the media:

“The government demands that the Little Sisters of the Poor sign a permission slip for abortion drugs and contraceptives, or pay of millions in fines. The Sisters believe that doing that violates their faith, and that they shouldn’t be forced to divert funds from the poor elderly and dying people they’ve devoted their lives to serve.” – ***Mark Rienzi, Senior Counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, and Lead Counsel for the Little Sisters*** (see full statement below)

The following statement can be attributed to ***Mark Rienzi, Senior Counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, and Lead Counsel for the Little Sisters***:

“Unfortunately, the federal government has started the new

year the same way that it ended the old one: trying to bully nuns into violating their religious beliefs.

“The government demands that the Little Sisters of the Poor sign a permission slip for abortion drugs and contraceptives, or pay of millions in fines. The Sisters believe that doing that violates their faith, and that they shouldn’t be forced to divert funds from the elderly poor they serve to the IRS.

“The government now asks the Supreme Court to believe that the very thing it is forcing the nuns to do—signing the permission slip—is a meaningless act. But why on earth would the government be fighting the Little Sisters all the way to the Supreme Court if it did not think its own form had any effect? The government’s brief offers no explanation for its surprising insistence on making the Little Sisters sign a form the government now says is meaningless.

“And now the government is asking the Supreme Court to look the other way while it coerces the Little Sisters. If the administration believed its contraceptive mandate was valid, it would join the Little Sisters’ request for Supreme Court review because the government has lost almost all of the cases in the lower courts. Instead, its brief today is devoted to trying to keep the Court out of the issue, which would leave hundreds of religious organizations subject to massive fines for following their religion.

“All of this is sad and unnecessary. Our federal government is massive and powerful. It can obviously find ways to distribute contraceptives and abortion pills without forcing nuns to be involved.”

To date, there are currently 91 lawsuits challenging the unconstitutional HHS mandate. The Becket Fund represents: Hobby Lobby, Little Sisters of the Poor, Guidestone, Wheaton College, East Texas Baptist University, Houston Baptist University, Colorado Christian

University, the Eternal Word Television Network, Ave Maria University, and Belmont Abbey College.

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