



**BELMONT ABBEY COLLEGE SUES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OVER NEW OBAMACARE MANDATE  
McDonald's & teachers' unions get exemptions but Catholic and all religious colleges do not**

Today, the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty filed a lawsuit against the federal government on behalf of Belmont Abbey College over the "Affordable Care Act" (aka "Obamacare"), that forces the College to violate its deeply-held religious beliefs or pay a severe fine. The heart of the lawsuit involves the recently issued Health and Human Services' mandate that requires thousands of religious organizations to provide, against their conscience, contraceptives they consider to be abortifacients—namely Plan B and Ella—and sterilization.

Although the government has already provided thousands of waivers for a variety of special interest groups including McDonald's and teachers' unions, often for reasons of commercial convenience, it refused to accommodate religious organizations. Instead, the government permitted a religious exemption so narrowly defined that it prompted the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to note that even Jesus' ministry would not qualify.

"A monk at Belmont Abbey may preach on Sunday that pre-marital sex, contraception, and abortions are immoral, but on Monday, the government would force the same monk to pay for students to receive the very drugs and procedures he denounces," said Hannah Smith, Senior Legal Counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. "This is much worse than an un-funded mandate; it is a monk-funded mandate."

The current exemption from the mandate excludes only certain religious employers whose purpose is to instill religious values and that employ and serve only individuals of their same faith. Accordingly, many religious colleges and universities will not qualify for the exemption. Belmont Abbey, as a small Catholic liberal arts college, teaches that contraception, sterilization, and abortion are all against God's law. The government mandate forces Belmont Abbey and others to make the Hobson's choice of either violating their deeply-held religious beliefs or paying a heavy fine and terminating their health insurance plans for employees and students.

"The mandate is nothing other than a deliberate attack by the government on the religious beliefs of millions of Americans," added Hannah Smith. "In the end, the government is forcing religious orders and believers to pay for services they find immoral or pay a stiff fine."

[The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty](#) is a non-profit, public-interest law firm dedicated to protecting the free expression of all religious traditions. The Becket Fund has a 17-year history of defending religious liberty for people of all faiths. Its attorneys are recognized as experts in the field of church-state law.

For more information, or to arrange an interview with one of the attorneys, please contact Emily Hardman, Communications Director, at [ehardman@becketfund.org](mailto:ehardman@becketfund.org) or call 435.232.3898.

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