



THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD  
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**STATEMENT BY DR. GEORGE O. WOOD  
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THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD, USA**

**RALLY FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY,  
Jefferson City, Missouri**

March 27, 2012

The Assemblies of God, with over 3 million adherents in the United States, including over 120,000 adherents in the state of Missouri, strongly objects to the recent federal ruling that mandates health insurance plans must cover contraceptives—including drugs that can cause abortions. While the plan provides very limited exception for “religious employers,” church-affiliated hospitals, colleges, and social services are not exempt.

We join with many other religious leaders, including those present at this rally representing many of the faith traditions in our state, including Baptists, Roman Catholics and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, in our strong objection to this attempt by the federal government to discriminate against persons of faith and religious communities.

This decision by the federal government violates personal conscience and religious freedom. Additionally, this intrusion by the federal government into religious rights granted under the First Amendment could have enormous negative implications for non-profit organizations that function with religious beliefs and values.

Our concern is that if this precedent holds, a door is opened to the federal government to impose other onerous requirements on church related institutions. For example, if the government can require religious institutions to offer prescriptions that lead to abortions, what else will the government require religious institutions to do? Will the government consider itself as having the right to impose upon church-related colleges, universities, and institutions a requirement that schools must alter their biblical commitment to student conduct or lose federal grants and loans?

While evangelicals hold different views on contraception than the Catholic Church, evangelicals realize the danger of establishing a precedent that leads to further and further encroachment by the government upon the First Amendment which states that the free exercise of religion shall not be prohibited.

The Assemblies of God urges the Missouri General Assembly to enact legislation, such as Senate Bill 749 and House Bill 1730, which will protect the religious liberties of Missouri citizens. No employer or employee should be required to pay for abortion drugs, contraceptives, or sterilization procedures. We urge bi-partisan support for this legislation and prompt approval by Governor Jay Nixon. In this way, we can send a strong message to Congress that the State of Missouri intends to protect the religious liberties of its citizens and its institutions.