



Resolution challenges contraception mandate for employers

The state House of Representatives voted today to oppose the Obama administration's mandate that most employers provide contraception in their health plans.

Voting 67 to 39, the state House supported a resolution sponsored by state Rep. Andrea LaFontaine (R-Columbus Township) that calls on the Department of Health and Human Services to rescind its requirement that religiously-affiliated institutions, like Catholic hospitals, include contraception in their health care plans for employees. Last week, President Obama proposed a compromise that would require insurance companies, not the employers themselves, to provide contraception coverage for those who wanted it. Catholic leaders oppose the mandate because they believe using birth control is morally wrong and against God's will.

Rep. LaFontaine said Obama's plan is an attack on religious freedom.

"Allowing the federal government to drift beyond its constitutional boundaries sets an extremely dangerous precedent," LaFontaine said.

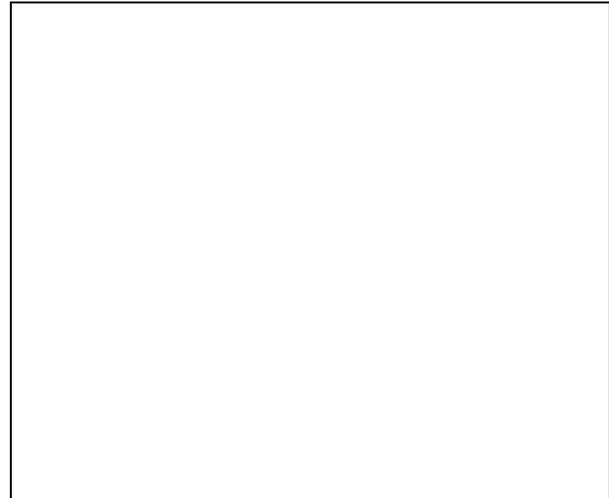
The Michigan Catholic Conference, a lobbying group based in Lansing that advocates for Catholic views, praised today's House resolution.

The Catholic group said it "commends House leadership for acting to support conscience rights and the first amendment right to religious freedom."

Supporters of the contraception mandate say that birth control is the most popular drug used by young women and that it helps their health, the health of families, and reduces health care costs. About 99% of women who have been sexually active have used birth control, say administration officials. And 98% of Catholic women have used birth control, said the liberal group Catholics for Choice.

But opponents – which include Catholic bishops and evangelical Christians – say the contraception mandate is an attack on freedom of religion. State Attorney General Bill Schuette also opposes the mandate and is leading an effort to have states join in

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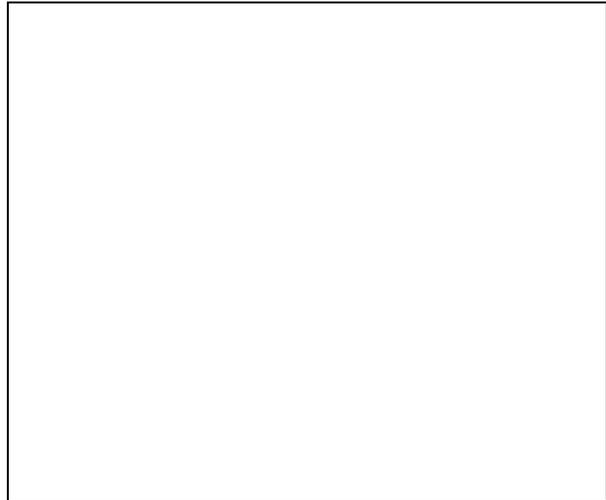
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three lawsuits against the mandate.

The resolution doesn't have any legal authority, but supporters said it sends an important message. Contact Niraj Warikoo: nwarikoo@freepress.com or 313-223-4792

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