Individualism Remains the Only Basis for Freedom in Medicine

By Richard E. Ralston

The U.S. Supreme Court will consider whether Obamacare’s provisions to mandate the coverage of contraceptives violate the right of private employers and employees to practice their religious beliefs.

We have reached a very sorry state in America if the basis for preventing government intrusion in our decisions about our own health care is an appeal to religion.

It is understandable, however, when citizens resist government force that compels them to violate their religious values. If the teachings of, say, Zoroaster, are incompatible with Obamacare, we shouldn't have to reassess our views of Zoroastrianism in order to maintain our health or our principles.

But that is beside the point.

The writers of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights did not expect or want Americans to share the same religious view. Based on the American experience, they expected the exact opposite, or there would have been no need to protect the practice of any religion, conventional or not. They required the government to stay out of decisions about religion and views on any subject expressed by speech or in the press.

The principle on which all of this was based is individualism. Individualism must be the basis for the freedom to practice our values—religious or otherwise.

Individualism remains the best tool to deny government the power to force us to buy health insurance, in general, or to forbid the purchase of the kind of health care plan we prefer. Individualism is the basis on which to resist any government decree about the medical services or medications we must accept or those that must be forbidden.

Individualism is the basis on which to deny state insurance commissioners the ability to forbid purchase of health insurance approved by insurance commissions in other states. (None of the state insurance commissioners trust the other commissioners, although the rest of us are forced to abide by the one in our state.)

Individualism requires us to deny the power of those commissioners or Obamacare bureaucrats who require us to buy only policies with a long list of coverage requirements inserted by providers who have successfully lobbied politicians to force everyone to pay for their services.

When government violates the principle of individualism, it harms everyone, including the religious. But when people defend their rights only on the basis of their religious views, they become targets for those who would otherwise leave them alone. Freedom of religion (or freedom of anything) enrages the collectivist, intellectual, political and journalist elites if it stands in the way of their control over every detail of our daily lives.

That makes religion itself the target of this rage for reasons having nothing to do with the merits or faults of any particular religion, resulting in vicious attacks on the religious for political reasons. It distracts the public and media from the real issue, which is not whether particular religious ideas are true or false, wise or absurd, but the matter of who has the right to make such evaluations.

Defending our rights on the basis of individualism forces these intellectual thugs to attack all of us who want to make our own decisions and manage our own lives—and exposes them for doing exactly that.

All Americans can unite on the importance of the freedom of us all to make our own decisions about insurance and medical care, and of the freedom of all physicians to make medical decisions based on their own best judgment, without government intervention.

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