



AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY FILES FEDERAL SUIT TO PROTECT RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

NAPLES, FL (February 21, 2012) –Jim Towey, [Ave Maria University](#) President announced today that the University is seeking declaratory and injunctive relief from a federal court in Florida, because the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services demands the University offer health plan services that undermine its firmly-held religious convictions.

“The federal government has no right to coerce the University into funding contraceptive services that include abortion-inducing drugs and sterilization, in the health plan we offer our employees,” said Towey. “Under the federal mandate Ave Maria University would be paying for these drugs if we complied with the law. So we will not. We are prepared to discontinue our health plan and pay the \$2,000 per employee, per year fine rather than comply with an unjust, immoral mandate in violation of our rights of conscience.”

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty filed suit this morning on behalf of the University.

“The federal mandate puts Ave Maria in a terrible bind,” said Kyle Duncan, General Counsel for the Becket Fund. “Either it betrays its faith and covers the drugs, or else it ends employee health benefits and pays hundreds of thousands in annual fines.”

Towey, former head of the Bush Administration’s Faith-Based and Community Initiatives is determined to stop the Administration’s assault on religious freedom. “Allowing a U.S. president of any political party or spiritual belief to force conformance to his or her religious or secular orthodoxy through executive action, is a perilous precedent,” said Towey. “I hope all of my colleagues in academia, including Catholic higher education, awaken to this danger.”

Ave Maria University’s case is the fourth lawsuit brought by the Becket Fund challenging the Obama administration’s abortion drug mandate. The Becket Fund also represents Belmont Abbey College (a Catholic college in North Carolina), Colorado Christian University (a nondenominational Christian University outside Denver), and the Eternal Word Television Network.