Gingo Lingo: Contraceptives And Employee Health Insurance

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"Now, I think we need to have a government that respects our religions. I'm a little bit tired about respecting every religion on the planet. I'd like them to respect our religion."

Newt Gingrich, Tampa, Florida, January 30, 2012

The Obama administration's decision to permit only a limited exemption for religious employers in the new contraceptive coverage mandate has ushered in a largely craven response by the right wing. As always, the worst of the crowd is the fortunately inimitable Newt Gingrich. Attention-monger *extraordinaire*, he preposterously blathered on Meet the Press last Sunday:

MR. GREGORY: Well, religious institutions, churches and the like, would be exempted, and there are states that have very similar rules to ensure the health and safety of, of women that they get covered in their workplace, whether it be a Catholic hospital or other kind of institution.

FMR. REP. GINGRICH: Well, I mean, you, you just managed to precisely repeat the Obama administration's line, which is also the American Civil Liberties Union line. The fact is what you're saying is there cannot be a genuinely Catholic university, there cannot be a genuinely Catholic hospital, that in fact it will have to be subordinated to the rules of a secular government. I mean, I happen to oppose rules that, that have, for example, forced Catholic Adoption Services to be closed because they're only willing to have adoptions for marriages between a man and a woman. There are states that now close that. I think that is a tremendous infringement of religious liberty. And I think you're saying the same thing. You're saying basically, "Oh, you can have the name on it, but you can't actually be a Catholic institution. You can't actually be an evangelical Christian institution. You can't actually be an orthodox Jewish institution because we the secular

government are going to impose on you." I think that's . . . I think this is a very profound moment for Americans to decide...

As the quote at the top of the page indicates, at least rhetorically, Gingrich places some restrictions on the First Amendment. The restriction is not exactlay a small one, "our religions" vs. "every religion on the planet." One could drive an 18-wheeler sideways through that exception.

What religions are "our religions"?

In fact, most Americans, of all political stripes, support the policy, so it's a political loser for the GOP to oppose it. In addidion, the right's record on their vocal First Amendment objections to the policy

Part of Obama's health-care reform bill, the new mandate will for the first time require most employer-provided private health-care plans to cover birth control without a co-pay or deductible.

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