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The politics of women's health

Heidi Schlumpf | Feb. 3, 2012 NCR Today

Like many of you, I have been deluged this week with Facebook posts and links pro and con about two women's reproductive health issues: the HHS decision to mandate contraceptive insurance coverage and the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation's decision to cut breast cancer screening funding to Planned Parenthood, which it just reversed [1].

That reversal, I think, says something about the politics of both decisions.

A number of Catholic commentators, from all over the political spectrum, have predicted an Obama loss in 2012 because of the decision to require some religious institutions to include contraceptive coverage in their health insurance for employees. To me, that seemed like wishful thinking on the part of conservatives and overstatement on the part of liberals and moderates.

I assume the Komen Foundation took the pulse of its donors and the rest of the culture before reversing its decision, finally concluding that the majority is more moderate about these issues, especially when the connection is weaker. Yes, Planned Parenthood is connected to abortion, but that's not all they do. And the grants were specifically for breast cancer screening.

(As an aside: Why don't some pro-life groups start opening clinics to offer free breast cancer screenings to poor women so they don't have to go to Planned Parenthood?)

It's already been established that the majority of Catholics approve of contraception, not to mention the majority of Americans. The bishops have done a good job of framing this as "religious liberty" issue, but even that is a stretch. They're not being asked to provide contraception, just offer what's become the standard in employee insurance.

My guess is that Obama also took the pulse of the church and country before the HHS decision, too.

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Links:
[1] http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/03/cancer-group-backs-down-on-cutting-off-planned-parenthood/?hp