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Mitt Romney ad says President Obama launched 'war on religion'

Shira Schoenberg | Aug. 10, 2012

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney accused Democratic President Barack Obama of launching a "war on religion" in a television ad released Thursday.

"President Obama used his health care plan to declare war on religion, forcing religious institutions to go against their faith," the ad's announcer states.

The ad pans to a shot of Romney on his recent visit to Poland saying, "In 1979, a son of Poland, Pope John Paul II, spoke words that would bring down an empire. Be not afraid."

It concludes, "When religious freedom is threatened, who do you want to stand with?"

The attack relates to a provision in Obama's health care overhaul requiring insurance companies to cover contraception with no co-pays. The Obama administration announced in January that it would exempt churches from the requirement, but not religious hospitals, charities or colleges that provide insurance plans to employees. After an outcry from Catholic leaders, who oppose the use of birth control, the administration said a religious employer would not be required to provide or pay for contraception coverage, but a woman's insurance company would be required to offer contraception coverage for free.

Obama campaign spokeswoman Lis Smith said, "President Obama believes that, in 2012, women should have access to free contraception as part of their health insurance, and he has done so in a way that respects religious liberty."

Smith said Romney "would take women's health back to the 1950's," citing comments by Romney that he would cut federal funding for Planned Parenthood, an organization that provides both women's health care and abortion services to low-income women.

The ad comes as the Obama campaign has been focusing on women's issues. The Obama campaign recently released a video featuring actress Elizabeth Banks talking about the importance of Planned Parenthood and criticizing Romney for wanting to cut it.

Georgetown University law student Sandra Fluke this week campaigned for Obama in Colorado. Fluke got national recognition after conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh denounced her in harsh language for wanting to testify at a congressional hearing in favor of mandated coverage for contraception.

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