The “Right of Conscience” Rule

December 19, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Rachel Maddow last night interviewed Rep. Diana Degette (D-Colorado), chair of the Pro-Choice Caucus in Congress, about new regulations from the Bush administration that allow health workers to refuse services that violate their personal beliefs.

The so-called "right of conscience" rule threatens to cut off federal funding to any entity that does not comply. The rule has major implications for reproductive rights. However, another consequence of this rule has been underreported?it may allow services to be denied to LGBTs.

Rachel Maddow:

> If, for example, there was a doctor who was providing HIV care and decided that because of religious beliefs he or she would not provide HIV treatment to anybody who was gay who was HIV positive, would that be covered here?

Rep. Degette:

> Absolutely, I mean there?s no standards whatsoever. Or again, the cashier at the pharmacy. If they decided that HIV was God?s punishment or something and they didn?t want to give them the drugs, then that person

could make that decision. It?s just so broad, it?s really disturbing. I think you hit the nail on the head, it would actually allow employees of health care facilities to discriminate against patients on a case-by-case basis.

This is super scary stuff. Thankfully, the Obama transition team has already indicated that they will be looking at this and all the other last-minute rules imposed by the lame-duck Bush.

Many thanks to Rachel Maddow for making the HIV connection to this story. I look forward to her continuing vigilance on our behalf whenever possible.

Watch the interview from “The Rachel Maddow Show” (7:34 is the length of the segment, but if you’re short on time just fast forward to 5:25 to hear the specific mention of HIV):
Visit msnbc.com for Breaking News, World News, and
News about the Economy

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/the-right-of-co