

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, and Diana DeGette (CO-1), co-chairs of the Congressional Pro-Choice Caucus, applauded today's ruling by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ensuring access to affordable birth control.

In their final rule on preventative services available under the Affordable Care Act, HHS maintained the exemption for churches, but gave other religiously affiliated organizations one year to comply with the rule. These preventative services for women include the full range of the Institute of Medicine's recommendations, such as all FDA-approved birth control medication.

"HHS made a carefully considered decision on this subject after receiving over 200,000 comments regarding the religious exemption," said Slaughter. "I am pleased that the Secretary has chosen to stand for the rights of women to decide how best to plan their families.

"The United States has one of the highest unintended pregnancy rates among industrialized countries, due in part to the fact that 1 in 3 American women currently struggle to afford birth control," continued Slaughter. "As the Institute of Medicine said in its recommendation, providing women with birth control at no cost is a significant step in preventing unintended pregnancies. All women in this country should have access to the services they need to plan their families according to their own consciences."

The rule provides an exemption for solely religious organizations, such as churches, who feel that providing birth control is a violation of their conscience. However, religious organizations that employ people with a wide variety of beliefs will have to comply with the rule within one year.

"I am pleased with President Obama's decision and his affirmation that access to contraception is a key component of health care," said DeGette. "Women's decisions on family planning should be their own, in consultation with their family and their doctor. One of the signature achievements of the Affordable Care Act was to increase access to health care for women."

Today's decision falls in line with a November 2011 letter led by Slaughter and DeGette urging

President Obama to secure free preventative services for women under the Affordable Care Act. [The letter is available here.](#)

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