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A crack in the ranks of the bishops

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NCR Today

In his *Washington Post* column today, EJ Dionne discusses the public disagreement among the U.S. bishops about the lawsuit challenging the contraception mandate in the Obama administration's health care law. Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, Calif., went public Tuesday in an interview with Kevin Clarke of *America* magazine. He expressed his concern that some groups "very far to the right" are turning the controversy over the contraception rules into "an anti-Obama campaign."

Blaire smells, quite rightly I think, the aroma of partisan politics in this lawsuit, and perhaps in the whole campaign about "religious freedom." At the very least, it can be used by the far right to try to defeat Obama.

Perhaps most telling, Dionne points out that the vast majority of dioceses in the United States did *not* join the lawsuit against the contraception mandate of the Obama administration. They apparently thought legal action was premature and needed more discussion among the bishops themselves.

Dionne says this is progress, and I guess I agree with him. But talk about a snail's pace. When the bishops start understanding that most Catholic women in fact *use* contraception in good conscience, and for them, this whole event is a non-issue. Then we will have made *real* progress.

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