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## The Supreme Court gets it wrong

by Pat Perriello

NCR Today

The Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy of the Interfaith Alliance issued a powerful statement following the latest Supreme Court decision on the mandate to provide contraception coverage to all women under the Affordable Care Act. He calls the decision providing an exemption to certain private companies a "grave error."

Gaddy notes that, for the first time in history, religious freedom has been expanded to include for profit corporations. In this instance, Gaddy says that the rights of employers are said to be more important than the rights of the employees. Yet Gaddy sees the first amendment as best used to protect the rights of minorities from the powerful. He declares, "Today's decision, which gives the powerful the right to force their religious beliefs on those around them, is a far cry from the best traditions of religious freedom."

I would like to add two of my personal reactions to these new decisions. First of all let me inject the latest decision on labor relations into the discussion as well. The court ruled that unions cannot collect dues from home health care aids.

If you explore these Supreme Court decisions, along with other recent cases, you can only come to one possible conclusion. This court interprets the laws with an eye to protecting the rights of big business and corporations. When it comes down to a choice of protecting the rights of individuals or corporations, this court invariably chooses to protect and expand the rights of the powerful.

Maybe it's just me, but I thought the purpose of the Constitution was to protect the rights of individuals, particularly the "little guy."

My second reaction is that maybe things are not so bad since the court seems to be showing some restraint. It is making its rulings as narrow as possible, and perhaps that demonstrates a sensitivity not to

infringe too greatly on the rights of the people.

Yet, there is some suggestion that this is indeed the court's intention. Some would say that the goal is to dramatically move this country to the right a little bit at a time. In this scenario, the court intends to chip away with every decision until it will be difficult to recognize this country we call America. Will we be able to recognize the court's new definition for religious freedom when it involves limiting my own individual freedom?

As we celebrate our country's independence we may want to rethink what that great experiment of 1776 was all about. Did our forefathers intend for us to be a country ruled by the people; or by a wealthy, business, and/or religious oligarchy?

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