

proposed is being considered, and it is expected we will have an answer from the Department of Labor within several months as to what the final regulations will be—if these rules go into effect as they are written, not only will we see a shrinking rural workforce, but our Nation's youth will be deprived of valuable career-training opportunities and a certain way of life many of us highly value will disappear.

It is important to us as a country—certainly to a State such as mine—that a young person experience the value of farming. I do not know how many times you talk to somebody who has determined what their career is going to be based on an experience they had as a young person and their ability to know what they want to do with their life is determined by the experiences they had as a young child. Our country cannot afford to lose the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

This rule should be withdrawn in its entirety. We know rural America's values are not always Washington values, and in the weeks ahead I ask my colleagues and Americans across the country to express their opposition to the Department of Labor for this destructive rule. Do not allow it to move forward so we can protect our values for the next generation of American farmers and make sure rural America remains a great place to live, grow, and raise a family.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

TRIBUTE TO ELI MANNING AND THE NEW YORK GIANTS

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I am pleased to rise in the Senate today to congratulate Eli Manning and the New York Giants football team for their great victory in the National Football League championship game. As most Senators probably know, Eli is a graduate of the University of Mississippi and he lives in Oxford, MS, during the off-season.

The Giants' 21-to-17 victory was the second NFL championship for this team in the last 4 years.

Eli Manning began the game by completing his first nine passes, which was a new Super Bowl record, and he was named the Most Valuable Player of the game. He became the fifth player in NFL history to win multiple Super Bowl Most Valuable Player awards. During the regular season, Manning threw for 4,933 yards and 29 touchdown passes, including a NFL record of 15 touchdown passes in fourth quarters. He also led six game-winning drives that allowed the Giants to overcome deficits in the final stage of their games.

Manning and his wife Abby have supported many worthy causes and have made a strong commitment to the health and education of young people in Mississippi. They have made a pledge to raise \$2.5 million for the Eli

Manning Children's Clinic at the Hospital for Children in Jackson, MS, and they have also donated \$1 million to start the Ole Miss Opportunity Scholarship Program, which helps children in Mississippi with special financial needs to have the opportunity to attend college.

Manning has served as a member of President Bush's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and is active with many other organizations, such as the March of Dimes and the American Red Cross. His commitment to voluntarism and national service is very impressive and worthy of high praise.

I am very proud to congratulate Eli Manning and the New York Giants as Super Bowl champions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

HHS MANDATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, throughout my Senate career I have spent a lot of time defending the first amendment. Most of it I spent defending one particular clause of that amendment, the one relating to the right of free speech, but recent events have shown quite unexpectedly the urgent need to defend another clause in the first amendment. I am referring, of course, to the right of free exercise of religion.

Make no mistake, the Obama administration's decision to force religious hospitals, charities, and schools to comply with a mandate that violates their religious views is abhorrent to the foundational principles of our Nation. No one in the United States—no one—should ever be compelled by their government to choose between violating their religious beliefs and being penalized for refusing. Yet that is precisely what this mandate would do.

One out of six patients in America is treated at a Catholic hospital. Catholic Charities is the largest provider of social services to poor children, families, and individuals in America. The Catholic Church runs the largest network of private schools in this country. These institutions have thrived because they have been allowed to freely pursue their religious convictions in a country that, until now, respected their constitutional right to do so. But this ruling should send a chill up the spine of people of all religious faiths and even of those with no faith at all because if the state—in this case, the Federal Government—is allowed to violate the religious rights of one religion, then surely it can violate those of others. If the rights of some are not protected, the rights of all are in danger. Isn't that what history clearly teaches? Isn't that what the Constitution is all about?

The Obama administration has crossed a dangerous line. The Founders knew that the right of religious belief is inviolable. They gave this God-given right the pride of place they knew it deserved, right there in the first

amendment, so that Americans would never have to fear its loss. Unfortunately, because of the actions of this administration, Americans now do.

This is a huge mistake that I hope the administration is currently reconsidering, and if they do not, Congress will act. The first amendment rights of the American people must be protected. Those of us who recognize the fundamental importance of religious freedom to our Nation will see to it that it is respected by this government and restored in full.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I want to talk about this recent HHS directive to faith-based organizations on health care and suggest that it is exactly the kind of problem many of us were concerned would develop when the government said it was going to take a greater role in deciding what health care would be like and who would make health care decisions. In this case, what kind of insurance could an employer give its employees if it is a religious organization?

There are several pieces of legislation that might deal with this issue. My guess is there will be several more unless the administration deals with it quickly and withdraws the position they have taken, which is that faith-based institutions would have to offer health insurance policies that violated their faith principles. It is a fundamental first amendment right of Americans to have the ability to pursue their faith-based principles.

In the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, passed by a Congress with a Democratic majority in both the House and Senate and signed by President Clinton, it appears to be clear that this is an incursion that the law itself, as well as the Constitution, does not allow. One of the most objectionable issues about the White House position—the administration's position—is that we want you to change your principles, and we are going to give you a year to accommodate that change.

Principles based on faith cannot be accommodated in a year. In fact, they should not be accommodated in a lifetime. They are exactly that; they are principles based on faith. This is about institutions that run hospitals, schools, daycare centers, all sorts of things under the umbrella of the mission of who they are. This is about how their employees relate to them as providers of health care insurance and the kind of insurance they provide. This is