

Mount St. Mary's protests HHS mandate in letter to president

By Catholic Review Staff

Mount St. Mary's University's leadership wrote a sharply worded open letter to President Barack Obama in the March 12 Washington Post to protest the federal government mandate requiring the provision of sterilization, contraception and abortion-inducing drugs in all health care plans as part of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

The letter was signed by Eugene M. Waldron Jr., chairman of the university's board of trustees, and Mount president Thomas H. Powell.

"Compelled by the Catholic teaching on human dignity, Mount St. Mary's has a longstanding commitment to providing quality health care benefits to employees and students in need," the letter said. "The mandate compromises our ability to provide health care in accord with our religious mission. The Mount St. Mary's University Board of Trustees, along with the entire Mount community, protests in the strongest possible terms this unjust and intrusive mandate."

In addition, the school's board of trustees adopted a resolution a week before denouncing the mandate and registering its protest. The university calls on the White House to provide an immediate religious exemption for all Catholic institutions, and other employers, to preserve the religious liberty at the heart of the Mount's, and the country's, founding.

The Mount's origins are in religious freedom since founder Father John DuBois fled persecution from his native France in the late 18th century. The Mount, founded in 1808, is the country's second oldest Catholic university.

"We are saddened to see that religious liberty is under threat in the United States today," the letter said. "The Mount St. Mary's University Board of Trustees, along with the entire Mount community, protests in the strongest possible terms this unjust and intrusive mandate."

The letter continued: "As engaged citizens, we appeal to you for help. We call on you to provide for an immediate religious exemption for all Catholic institutions and other employers. We appeal to you, Mr. President, and all those with responsibility in government, to preserve the religious liberty at the heart of our university's, and our country's, founding."