



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY APPLAUDS U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISION
PROTECTING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**

The following is a statement from Jim Towey, President of Ave Maria University, and former Assistant to the President of the United States and Director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, in response to today's decision by the Supreme Court of the United States in the Hobby Lobby case:

AVE MARIA, FL (June 30, 2014) – “Ave Maria University is thrilled that Hobby Lobby’s rights of conscience and religious liberty prevailed. This is a great day for faith-based organizations and a sharp rebuke of the Obama administration and its treatment of sincerely-held religious belief.

The administration waged a twenty-eight month campaign of harassment against Ave Maria that endangered the health insurance of our employees and forced us to expend massive amounts of time and energy defending our rights. Ave Maria University was among the first to go to federal court to fight their proposed, unjust regulations. Today’s decision by the Supreme Court is a victory for all who support faith-based organizations and their right to practice their religion free from governmental interference.

People can disagree about the morality of contraception, and the federal government already has the ability to fund these services to whatever extent it wishes, but faith-based colleges and universities should not be compelled to violate conscience to carry out such a mandate. The Obama administration could have expanded access to contraception through any number of methods but instead chose to require Ave Maria University and others to be complicit in their scheme. The Supreme Court made it clear today that the Obama administration violated Federal law when it failed to choose the least restrictive way to offer these services.

Because of the Court’s reprimand of the Obama administration’s policy, we are now more confident that Ave Maria University’s pending lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida will end successfully and our legal claims will be vindicated. HHS Secretary Burwell should clean up the mess of her predecessor and immediately conform her agency’s regulations to the High Court’s holding and exempt Ave Maria University and other plaintiffs in dozens of lawsuits throughout America.

I am grateful to the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty for its excellent legal representation of Hobby Lobby and our University and soon I will be consulting with them on our next steps.

As we have done since our founding, Ave Maria University will continue to offer a generous health insurance plan for our 170 employees – one that provides access to quality health care and honors our sincerely-held religious beliefs. That’s the American way.