A Statement from the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

We, the ecclesiastical leaders of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (35 District Presidents and five Synod Vice Presidents), stand united with President Matthew Harrison in full support of his testimony before the Congressional Committee on Government Oversight and Reform delivered on February 16, 2012, and hereby commend to the church President Harrison's statements in defense of religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

We also stand with all citizens of the United States—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, other Christians, as well as members of other faiths—in defense of religious liberty and freedom of conscience for individuals and institutions, unobstructed by government intrusion or coercion as guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. We will obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Statement on HHS Decision and Religious Freedom (February 3, 2012)

President Matthew Harrison's Testimony (February 16, 2012)

Resolved by the Council of Presidents
February 21, 2012

Resolved, that the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod stands with President Matthew Harrison in full support of his testimony before the Congressional Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, and be it finally

Resolved, that the Council of Presidents commends to the Synod President Harrison's statements in defense of religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

President James Baneck
North Dakota District

President David Benke
Atlantic District

President Richard Boche
Wyoming District

President David Bueltmann
Central Illinois District

President Terry Cripe
Ohio District

President Jon Diefenthaler
Southeastern District

President Donald Fondow
Minnesota North District

President Terry Forke
Montana District

President Dan Gilbert
Northern Illinois District

President Randall Golter
Rocky Mountain District

President Barrie Henke
Oklahoma District

President Kenneth Hennings
Texas District

President James Keurulainen
New England District

President William Klettke
New Jersey District

President Keith Kohlmeier
Kansas District

President Carl Krueger
SELC District

President Kenneth Lampe
Mid-South District

President Paul Linnemann
Northwest District

President David Maier
Michigan District

Doctor Paul Maier
Third Vice President

President Daniel May
Indiana District

President Ray Mirly
Missouri District

Reverend Herbert Mueller
First Vice President

Doctor Scott Murray
Fifth Vice President

President Robert Newton
California Nevada Hawaii District

Reverend Daniel Preus
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President Dale Sattgast
South Dakota District

President Brian Saunders
Iowa District East

President Timothy Scharr
Southern Illinois District

President Kurtis Schultz
Southern District

President Lane Seitz
Minnesota South District

President Paul Sieveking
Iowa District West

President Russell Sommerfeld
Nebraska District

President David Stechholz
English District

President Larry Stoterau
Pacific Southwest District

President Gregory Walton
Florida Georgia District

President Paul Weber
North Wisconsin District

President Chris Wicher
Eastern District

President John Wille
South Wisconsin District

Doctor John Wohlrabe
Second Vice President

A Resolution of the Council of Presidents

February 21, 2012

Whereas, the United States Department of Health and Human Services has issued mandates requiring employers and insurance companies to provide contraceptives in their benefit plans, even those that cause the death of the unborn, and

Whereas, to require religious organizations to provide these services violates consciences and the principles of religious liberty guaranteed in the US Constitution, and

Whereas, the President of the Synod has issued the following statement:

> *"We are deeply distressed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) recent decision to require nearly all private health plans, including those offered by religious employers, to cover contraceptives. This will include controversial birth-control products such as 'Ella' and the 'morning after' pill, even though the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns that such drugs can cause the death of a baby developing in the womb. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) objects to the use of drugs and procedures that are used to take the lives of unborn children, who are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception, and we are opposed to the HHS' decision mandating the coverage of such contraceptives.*
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> *"This HHS action relates to a provision in the 'health care reform' legislation (the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) signed into law in 2010. The church's benefits partner, Concordia Plan Services, which provides health care coverage to nearly 48,000 people, has been actively monitoring this legislation and, as a result, Concordia Health Plan (CHP)—the LCMS church workers' health plan—has been maintained as a "grandfathered" plan. As such, employers and workers participating in CHP would not be subjected to the mandate. However, many religious organizations do not have grandfathered plans and cannot avail themselves of the extremely narrow religious-employer exemption, which only is applicable to religious employers that primarily serve and employ members of that faith.*
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> *"For centuries, Lutherans have joyfully delivered Christ's mercy to others and embraced His call to care for the needy within our communities and around the world. In a nation that has allowed more than 54 million legal abortions since 1973, we must consider the marginalization of unborn babies and object to this mandate.*
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> *"In addition, I encourage the members of the LCMS to join with me in supporting efforts to preserve our essential right to exercise our religious beliefs. This action by HHS will have the effect of forcing many religious organizations to choose between following the letter of the law and operating within the framework of their religious tenets. We add our voice to the long list of those championing for the continued ability to act according to the dictates of their faith, and provide compassionate care and clear Christian witness to society's most vulnerable, without being discriminated against by government.*
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> *"The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, a church body of sinners redeemed by the blood of Jesus, has affected the lives of millions of people with care, aid, housing, health care, spiritual care and much more. We have been a force for good in this nation, promoting education (the nation's largest Protestant school system), marriage and giving people the tools and assistance to be good citizens. We live and breathe Romans 13:3–7. The governing authorities are 'God's servant for good.' We pray constantly for our President and those in authority. We have sent our sons and daughters to fight for this country. We have provided military chaplains, elected officials, officers, including some who have held the highest military offices and other appointed*

positions in this country. Our people have and are serving as congressmen and women and senators.

"Increasingly we are suffering overzealous government intrusions into what is the realm of traditional and biblical Christian conscience. We believe this is a violation of our First Amendment rights. We will stand, to the best of our ability, with all religious and other concerned citizens, against this erosion of our civil liberty. Come what may, we shall do everything we can, by God's grace, to 'obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29)."

And

Whereas, President Matthew Harrison has testified before a congressional committee to defend religious liberty and the freedom to act according to conscience [see: http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=1374], and

Whereas, citizens belonging to various religious traditions also share these same concerns, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Council of Presidents of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod stands with President Matthew Harrison in full support of his testimony before the Congressional Committee on Government Oversight and Reform, and be it finally

Resolved, that the Council of Presidents commends to the Synod President Harrison's statements in defense of religious liberty and freedom of conscience.