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SPECIAL REPORT

The Little Sisters of Limousine Liberalism

By George Neumayr on 2.16.12 @ 6:09AM

How much is Sr. Carol Keehan worth to the pro-Obamacare Catholic Health Association? Answer: \$962,467.

I called up the Catholic Health Association (CHA) yesterday. I wanted to nail down the exact compensation figures for some of its executives, including the salary and benefits of Sister Obamacare, also known as Daughter of Charity nun Carol Keehan, who last week helped Barack Obama engineer his latest con job -- the bogus conscience "compromise" designed to hoodwink Catholics into voting for his reelection.

As it has been widely reported, Obama conferred with Sister Keehan before his announcement last Friday. Then, lo and behold, she praised his revision as an inspiring resolution to the thorny issue of "religious freedom" soon after the sham event concluded.

So let's get down to brass tacks. How much is Sister Keehan worth for such political interventions? The checkered Catholic hospitals Keehan represents as chief executive officer of the Catholic Health Association stand to receive gobs and gobs of cash from the federal government if Obamacare holds up past 2012. Consequently, the members of the association are more than happy to pony up huge salaries to executives skilled at manipulating the Catholic electorate for Obama.

Keehan is worth \$962,467 to them in total salary and benefits, according to the Schedule J (Form 990) 2010 document sent to me by CHA. Theoretically, this is paid to the nun's order, though CHA adds an intriguing caveat to its compensation figures:

The descriptions below provide an overview of the composition of the five compensation figure columns (B, C, D, E and F). Note that for Sisters Carol Keehan and Patricia Talone and for Father Tom Nairn, all amounts in column

B, except for certain fringe benefits included in column (B)(iii), were paid to their respective orders.

In other words, not all the money goes to their religious orders. What are these "certain fringe benefits" to which the caveat refers? I didn't get a comprehensible answer from CHA. But its spokesman assured me that these "certain fringe benefits" weren't large. Maybe the *Wall Street Journal* should drill down into the numbers.

According to the form, base compensation for "Daughters of Charity for Sr. Keehan" was \$682,982. "Bonus and incentive compensation" was \$136,000. "Other reportable compensation" -- which is the (B)(iii) to which the caveat refers -- was \$131,888. Nontaxable benefits were \$11,597. All this adds up to salary and benefits totaling \$962,467.

Presumably, her 2011 salary and benefits will exceed \$1 million, if the past is any measure. (Her 2009 salary and benefits fell in the \$850,000 range.)

It turns out that left-wing "Catholic Social Justice" is a good career move. Sister Talone, to which the caveat refers above, pulls down for the Sisters of Mercy "\$416,623" in total compensation, while Fr. Nairn's order, the Franciscan Friars, snatched \$194,947.

Who knew that lobbying for the corporal works of mercy paid so well? Of course, the dirty little secret of secularized "non-profit" Catholic hospitals is that they rake in enormous profits. Hence, some of its executives garner salaries/benefits north of \$9 million. Obamacare will release another avalanche of federal government cash with which to feather their nests.

"For where your treasure is, your heart will be also," said Jesus Christ. A pedestrian reduction of the Son of God's saying is: Follow the money.

But say this at least for Sister Obamacare: she displays gumption that the waffling U.S. bishops lack. She still wears the pants in the clerical family.

She spun Obama's "compromise" effortlessly, while the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) was caught flatfooted. In his tiresomely inane and people-pleasing way, USCCB president Cardinal-designate Timothy Dolan initially praised Obama's con job as a first "step in the right direction." This gave the White House nearly a day of good publicity with which to confuse Catholics.

"Encouraging" words from the USCCB, declared CNN's Wolf Blitzer last

Friday. Other networks and newspapers soon followed with rosy reports that blared, "USCCB: Obama compromise a 'step in the right direction.'"

Later that Friday, the USCCB issued a new statement pronouncing Obama's revision "unacceptable." But the damage was already done.

Keehan must chuckle at the cluelessness and doctrinal timidity of the bishops. The USCCB still can't decide if "Catholic" pols whipping the Church in America on issues like abortion and gay marriage should be denied Communion. This is too tough a call for the USCCB, so no uniform policy exists. (In a typical comment from the USCCB crowd, Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C. has said that he won't withhold Communion from Nancy Pelosi, as that "style" of confrontation makes him uncomfortable.)

While the bishops dither, Keehan ruthlessly organizes the Little Sisters of Leftism for Obama's reelection. Her task is a little trickier this year but she could still pull it off.

In 2008, many bishops, priests, and nuns voted for Obama and they probably will again. At the end of the day, they are Democrats first and Catholics second. Besides, they agree with Obama on issues like birth control. They, too, view the Church's teachings as passé.

Indeed, Saul Alinsky couldn't have organized Obama's Fifth Column within the Church any better than Sister Keehan and company.

"Obama is not a pro-abortion president," Giovanni Maria Vian, editor of *L'Osservatore Romano*, said a while back, while former papal household theologian Cardinal Georges Cottier congratulated Obama for his "humble realism."

Catholic *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne, who got Keehan's memo and is back on the team (not that he was ever off it) after Obama's "compromise," enjoys seeing traditional Catholics in America get their wires crossed with ostensible allies at the USCCB and Vatican. The "Vatican clearly views Obama through a broader prism," said Dionne after the remarks of Vian and Cottier.

Santa Fe Archbishop Michael Sheehan told the openly heretical *National Catholic Reporter* that he supported Notre Dame's decision to confer an honorary degree upon Barack Obama and could not understand the "big scene" of protests about it. Asked by *NCR* if other bishops agreed with him, he replied, "Of course, the majority."

He declared that "we don't want to isolate ourselves from the rest of America by our strong views on abortion and the other things."

The rise of the Tea Party frankly scares these bishops. Nervous headlines they didn't dare run in their diocesan newspapers after the election of Barack Obama suddenly appeared after the House Dems got clocked in November of 2010. *Catholic San Francisco* ran a headline after the election that read: "Social Justice Agenda in Jeopardy in US."

America magazine, the Jesuit journal of dissent, also found the Tea Party-inspired results troubling. Steve Schneck, director of the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies at the Catholic University of America, wrote in a piece on its website that the Church's "years of efforts in America to support public policies that reflect its moral vision were dealt a blow Tuesday evening."

No doubt Obama will reassemble his "Catholic advisory committee" and continue to generate donations from Catholic colleges and universities. Last time around, the faculty at Jesuit Georgetown led all college faculties, religious and non-religious, in donations to Obama.

Several Jesuit schools joined Keehan in praising Obama for his HHS "compromise," which was awfully big of them since they never needed it in the first place, given that they already hand out condoms and contraceptives to their students.

Obama's 2008 Catholic advisory committee included such national co-chairs as Sr. Jamie Phelps, OP, professor of theology at Xavier University, and Sr. Catherine Pinkerton with the Congregation of St. Joseph. Surely, his 2012 one will be chaired by an even worthier champion -- Sister Keehan, the Daughter of Charity worth close to a million bucks a year.

About the Author

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<http://spectator.org/archives/2012/02/16/the-little-sisters-of-limousin>

What Did CHA's Carol Keehan Know and When Did She Know It?

Register news analysis: As threats to religious liberty escalate, critics say it's time to establish who truly speaks for the Church in the United States.

BY JOAN FRAWLEY DESMOND

| Posted 2/14/12 at 1:20 PM

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama on Feb. 10 confirmed that his administration was offering an “accommodation” to religious groups opposed to a controversial federal rule requiring private health plans to provide contraception and abortion services.

As reported in the media, church-affiliated employers would not have to directly cover those services; instead, their insurance plans would cover them.

The announcement prompted an expression of gratitude from Daughter of Charity Sister Carol Keehan, the president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, and a polite, but wary response from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which said they needed to study the proposed modification.

That evening, the bishops’ conference formally rejected the president’s “accommodation” as essentially meaningless.

For the rest of the weekend, amid a blur of news headlines and talking heads that offered conflicting judgments, the faithful in the pews struggled to determine what, if anything, had changed regarding the administration’s policy.

The contrasting responses from the CHA leader and the USCCB have left Catholics and the general public confused about who speaks for the Church on a matter of grave institutional concern and whether the Obama administration exploited a lack of clarity about that matter.

The dueling positions have fueled questions about the basis of Sister Carol’s endorsement: USCCB officials and health-care experts have since confirmed that the government has not issued any binding regulations that legally override the controversial contraception mandate finalized by the Department of Health and Human Services on Jan. 20.

Subsequent media coverage and interviews suggest that while the White House cleared its talking points with Sister Carol in advance of the president’s public address, the USCCB had been excluded from the administration’s deliberations.

“Obama has made clear who is part of his ideological coalition and who is not. Discussions on the structure and restructuring of the contraceptive policy were conducted between the administration and pro-choice and feminist groups. The institutions targeted by the mandate — particularly those represented by the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) — were not in the room,” stated Michael Gerson in a [column published in *The Washington Post* today](#).



"The administration engaged in no substantive consultation with Catholic bishops, who were only called to receive pronouncements. Interest-group liberalism is alive and well in the Obama White House," Gerson wrote.

Special Treatment?

However, media reports suggest that Sister Carol received special treatment from the White House. A Feb. 10 *New York Times* [story](#) reported that the president's "accommodation" was designed specifically to address Sister Carol's concerns, not those of the U.S. bishops.

"The fight was for Sister Carol Keehan — head of an influential Catholic hospital group, who had supported President Obama's health-care law — and Catholic allies of the White House seen as the religious left," reported the *Times*.

Richard Doerflinger, the U.S. bishops' chief lobbyist on life issues, confirmed that the conference had not received the relevant documents regarding the reported "accommodation" until Friday evening and that more information arrived on "Saturday, Feb. 11, at 5:27pm."

After the close of the Friday workday, said Doerflinger, the conference was finally able to sift through all the documents — only to conclude that nothing of substance had changed since the HHS final rule was approved last month.

That same rule had been "finalized without change," said Doerflinger, who stressed one single point: "The only thing that has force of law is that same final rule. It's still in place. The rest is something that might happen."

The administration informed the USCCB that "some time in the coming months we will issue new rulemaking for organizations that are not exempt from the mandate," Doerflinger said.

"An organization that morally objects to these services is not exempt," said Doerflinger. "It is not able to give its employees a plan without this contraception mandate."

In striking contrast to the USCCB's conclusion, Sister Carol greeted the president's "accommodation" with enthusiasm. Her support was touted by the administration and cited in media coverage of the breaking story.

By Feb. 11, [the White House blog](#) had posted statements from Sister Carol, Catholic Charities USA and Planned Parenthood supporting Obama's "accommodation." However, the Catholic Charities USA statement, a modified version of that organization's original and more enthusiastic response to the president's move, could not be described as an endorsement.

Sister Carol, however, has not modified her response to the president's overture. From the beginning, her endorsement asserted that religious-liberty concerns had been addressed.

But she did not specify how the president's action had met the concerns of church-affiliated institutions, including the members of her association.

Did Sister Carol receive additional binding assurances or was she simply trusting the president to make good on his promise to a faithful ally?

A review of the CHA website suggests that its CEO and president does not, in fact, have all the facts. A [new statement](#) assures anxious members that the organization "will review the proposed new rules for the HHS mandate."

"CHA looks forward to reviewing the specifics of the changes in the mandated benefits. Many members have called with questions about these since they were a concern as first published. On Friday, Feb. 10, 2012, we were notified that our organizations would not have to buy or refer employees for contraception and other services. We were also told that the self-insured plans would be accommodated in this. At

this time, there are many unanswered questions about specifics. We now have the challenging work of reviewing the proposed rules, examining their impact and giving input before they are finalized.

"Because many members have asked about specifics in the rules and also the process for applying for the one-year exception, we have included links to the rules and to the guidance on the safe harbor with this email."

"As more is known about this, we will be getting that information out to the membership as quickly as possible," read the new statement.

But if the CHA has not established the specifics of the "accommodation," why did Sister Carol endorse it?

Sister Carol did not respond to a request for clarification. Bishop Kevin Vann of Fort Worth, Texas, the episcopal liaison on the CHA board, referred requests for comment to the CHA.

It is still not clear whether the board approved Sister Carol's statement on Feb. 10, as Sister Carol and Bishop Vann did not respond to questions regarding this point.

Who Speaks for the Church?

The confusion and possible institutional damage generated by Sister Carol's public endorsement have led some Catholic experts in the health-care field to demand an accounting.

"On the basis of what information and what authority did she issue this endorsement? It's embarrassing from a policy standpoint," noted Paul Danello, an expert on civil and canon law issues in Catholic health care, who has received calls from Catholic hospitals worried about the implications of the HHS final rule.

"If the CHA board hasn't authorized this, if she has no mandate from the USCCB, and if there are no legally binding documents, she is operating without any legal, governance or regulatory basis. That is a hell of a situation for a Roman Catholic nun that heads the Catholic Health Association to be in."

Danello says it's past time for Church leaders to address Sister Carol's public statements and actions with regard to the formal Church policy on a complex and critical issue.

"It's the right hand fighting against the left hand," he said. "Who is speaking for the Church here? The Church needs to get its house in order."

Joan Frawley Desmond is the Register's senior editor.