



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

May 14, 2012

Statement of John J. DeGioia on 2012 GPPI Tropaia Ceremony

In recent days on the Georgetown University campus and in the larger American Catholic community, concerns have been expressed by some who object to an invitation to Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to participate in a Public Policy Institute awards ceremony during the University's commencement weekend.

Last fall, public policy students expressed preferences for potential speakers who could participate in the program. Given her role in crafting the landmark legislation that will make health care more accessible to 34 million Americans who are currently uninsured, Secretary Sebelius was identified by students as a leading policy maker in our country who could contribute to this event. Secretary Sebelius has a long and distinguished record of public service, including two terms as governor of Kansas before beginning her service in April, 2009, as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. She is also the spouse and the mother of Georgetown graduates.

In early January, an invitation was extended to Secretary Sebelius and she accepted. In the weeks that followed, elements of the legislation, specifically terms covering contraception, dominated our public discourse and impacted our Georgetown community very directly.

In different contexts over the past three months, including a March 14 "Statement on Religious Freedom and HHS Mandate," the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops expressed strong opposition to the position put forward by the Obama Administration. Some have interpreted the invitation of Secretary Sebelius as a challenge to the USCCB. It was not. The invitation to Secretary Sebelius occurred prior to the January 20th announcement by the Obama Administration of the modified healthcare regulations.

The Secretary's presence on our campus should not be viewed as an endorsement of her views. As a Catholic and Jesuit University, Georgetown disassociates itself from any positions that are in conflict with traditional church teachings.

We are a university, committed to the free exchange of ideas. We are a community that draws inspiration from a religious tradition that provides us with an intellectual, moral, and spiritual foundation. By engaging these values we become the University we are meant to be.