

Seven states sued the federal government Thursday over a new rule that expands protections for doctors and other health care workers who refuse to participate in abortions and other medical procedures because of religious or moral objections.

They claim the federal rule, issued by the Bush administration last month and set to take effect Tuesday, would trump state laws protecting women's access to birth control, reproductive health services and emergency contraception.

Blumenthal said the regulations "are flawed and defective" and would "unconstitutionally and unconscionably interfere with women's health care rights."

Blumenthal said the rule "shrouds the term abortion in new and unnecessary ambiguity" and encourages medical providers to define it themselves and deny patients contraception, including emergency contraception for rape victims.

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