

# EQUITY

# FORWARD

## The Majority of the Commission on Unalienable Rights Members Have Egregious Track Records on Reproductive Rights

### Background

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [announced the creation](#) of a new [Commission on Unalienable Rights](#) in May 2019 and was [formally launched](#) in July 2019 with a [mandate](#) to advise the Secretary of State on human rights in U.S. foreign policy. Given the Trump administration's consistent efforts to undermine human rights on the world stage, the Commission's formation was met with [concerns](#) that it would co-opt human rights language for its preferred policies. Among the conservative ideas the Commission is likely to champion are the "natural family" and "traditional values" – while limiting reproductive rights and immigration, among other human rights. The Commission largely comprises [right-wing, anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQ hardliners](#) who were all appointed by Pompeo. This fact sheet focuses on the commissioners Equity Forward found to have problematic human records with particular attention to reproductive rights.

### Members:

- **Ambassador Mary Ann Glendon (Chair):** Glendon is a noted anti-abortion [advocate](#), having won numerous [awards](#) for her work, including [representing](#) the Holy See at the 1995 UN Conference on Women. Glendon has been an outspoken [opponent](#) of same-sex marriage, on the Board of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, an anti-LGBTQ organization that, [according](#) to the Southern Poverty Law Center, "works to continue a longstanding Roman Catholic campaign to create a separate space for religious people removed from public scrutiny and laws (though while still receiving public funds and subsidies)."
- **Professor Paolo Carozza:** Carozza has long fought reproductive health access, specifically attacking the Affordable Care Act (ACA)'s birth control benefit. He spoke out against birth control access available at [Notre Dame](#), where he teaches. Carozza, along with two dozen Notre Dame colleagues, signed [a letter](#) protesting the ACA's mandate that health insurance plans cover birth control, claiming that some contraceptives "cause abortion" and that the rule is a "grave violation of religious freedom". Carozza spoke on a 2016 right to life [panel](#) on a "Pro-Life World" at Notre Dame. He has used natural law to [dispute](#) the legality of abortion.
- **Professor Hamza Yusuf Hanson ("Hamza Yusuf"):** Yusuf has published [academic scholarship](#) calling abortion "an assault on sanctified life." Yusuf believes that [scripture and science](#) should be used hand in hand to advance anti-abortion causes. He has [insinuated](#) that the Supreme Court's decision on abortion could be reopened.
- **Dr. Jacqueline Rivers:** Rivers is the executive director of [The Seymour Institute On Black And Policy Studies](#) – a "pro-life, pro-family" organization committed to defending marriage as between men and women. Rivers spoke at a [2014 Vatican-Sponsored Humanum Colloquium](#) "affirming traditional marriage" where she [warned](#) that "the unavoidable message" of same-sex marriage "is a profoundly false and damaging one: that children do not need a mother and father in a permanent complementary bond". Rivers, who is a Harvard sociology lecturer, spoke on a [2017 Harvard Law Students For Life panel](#) entitled "Why We Are Pro-Life: Dignity, Equality, Human Rights" – with Ambassador Mary Ann Glendon.

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- **Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik:** Soloveichik has [criticized](#) the ACA birth control benefit as a violation of religious freedom and [praised](#) President Trump and Vice President Pence for their work rolling back the birth control benefit. He spoke on a [2017 panel](#) to defend the “sanctity” of heterosexual marriage.
- **Dr. Christopher Tollefsen:** Tollefsen has strong ties to anti-reproductive rights, anti-LGBTQ advocate Robert P. George, with whom he has co-authored several Public Discourse [articles](#) and an anti-abortion book. Tollefsen has decried abortion as [immoral and resultant of a “culture of death”](#), he has also [compared embryonic research to “Nazi science”](#). Tollefsen has written numerous articles for Public Discourse [refuting gender transitions](#) and [defending gender binaries](#).
- **Mr. F. Cartwright Weiland (Rapporteur):** Weiland supported Texas unsuccessfully in a [landmark Supreme Court case](#) in which the Court ruled the state could not place restrictions that create undue burdens on women seeking abortions. While working at The Texas Conservative Coalition Research Institute, Weiland prepared [amicus briefs](#) on behalf of the state in *Whole Woman’s Health vs. Hellerstedt*.
- **Dr. Peter Berkowitz (Executive Secretary):** Berkowitz is a longtime fellow at conservative think tank, The Hoover Institute, and a regular contributor for RealClearPolitics. For more than a decade, he has used his platforms to spread his ideas which reject freedom for LGBTQ communities, support the restriction of abortion access, and [deny](#) the significant impact of racism in America.
- **Professor Kenneth Anderson**
- **Dr. Russell A. Berman**
- **Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett**
- **Dr. David Tse-Chien Pan**

Learn more about the Commission on [Global Spotlight](#).