

# Baptist Briefs: Appeals court denies GuideStone's Obamacare challenge

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A federal appeals court has determined requiring a religious nonprofit to opt out of mandated contraceptive coverage under Obamacare is not a substantial burden on religious exercise. The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said religious organizations including [GuideStone Financial Services](#) of the Southern Baptist Convention either must cover FDA-approved contraceptives in employee insurance plans or follow the government's rules for opting out of the contraceptive mandate. Plaintiffs in three cases combined before the appellate court objected not only to paying for methods of birth control they believe can cause an abortion, but also to the government's plan for accommodating religious objection to the requirement. The Denver-based court is the fifth appellate court to turn back challenges by faith-based nonprofits to the HHS accommodation. GuideStone, its co-plaintiffs Reaching Souls International and Truett-McConnell College, and attorneys from the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and Locke Lord are studying the opinion to determine next steps, including possible appeals. "This is a disappointing decision, for both religious liberty and for the sanctity of life," GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said. "This is a day for all of us to bombard the throne of grace with petitions for a favorable outcome on appeal, for strength of resolve, for the unborn in this country and for all of our leaders, so many of whom have turned their back on the founding principles of this country. We are working already with our legal advisors to determine our next steps. Today was a setback. It is not the final outcome."

**LifeWay Research partners with Wheaton evangelism center.** [LifeWay](#)

[Research](#) and the [Billy Graham Center for Evangelism](#) at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., have partnered to “facilitate the advancement of biblically faithful evangelism.” Ed Stetzer, the executive director of Nashville-based LifeWay Research, will serve as senior fellow for the evangelism center. During the year-long partnership, Stetzer will consult and lead the center’s Wheaton-based staff and oversee a national survey about the state of evangelism in America. The findings of this research project are slated for release at a 2016 multidenominational conference, jointly hosted by the center and LifeWay Research. Rick Richardson, professor of evangelism and leadership at Wheaton College, will work with Stetzer and LifeWay Research staff to develop the collaborative study that will examine the unchurched and churches most effectively reaching them.