

SBC agencies support GuideStone lawsuit in contraceptive case

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Three sister Southern Baptist Convention entities filed a brief supporting [GuideStone Financial Resources'](#) objection to being forced to provide indirectly what they consider [abortion-inducing drugs](#) under Obamacare.



[Southern Baptist Theological Seminary](#), [Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission](#) and the [International Mission Board](#) defended GuideStone's claim before the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that Department of Health and Human Services rules for implementing the Affordable Care Act violate the denominational insurance provider's religious liberty. Southern Seminary President Al Mohler also joined the friend-of-the-court brief individually.

In March, the Southern Baptist owners of Hobby Lobby argued before the U.S. Supreme Court against a portion of the 2010 health care law that allows women free access to 20 forms of birth control approved by the FDA. GuideStone likewise contends some of those methods, such as IUDs and "morning-after" birth-control pills, are not truly contraceptives but

cause an early abortion by preventing a fertilized ovum from attaching to the womb.

Unlike Hobby Lobby, a for-profit corporation, GuideStone qualifies for an accommodation that allows religious organizations to exclude coverage for some or all contraceptives. However, it requires them either to provide or arrange for payment of contraceptive services at no cost to plan participants through a third-party administrator.

Violates religious beliefs

The lawsuit and brief, however, argue the Health and Human Services accommodation still requires GuideStone to provide drugs and devices indirectly that violate Southern Baptists' religious beliefs.



Hobby Lobby founder Steve Green. (RNS Photo) "Scripture and Southern Baptist belief prohibit not only direct and personal wrongdoing, but also the enabling, authorizing, incentivizing or aiding of another in doing what the Christian believes to be sin," the brief argues.

“Christian doctrine teaches that believers who knowingly aid or abet another’s wrongdoing have themselves done wrong,” it continues. “Accordingly, a statute or regulation requiring a Southern Baptist individual or ministry to be complicit in conduct that the Christian faith teaches is morally wrong forces that person or ministry into an impossible choice—to either violate conscience or violate the law—and imposes a substantial burden on the exercise of religion.”

A grave and moral wrong

The three agencies assert Southern Baptist doctrine teaches life begins at conception and taking innocent human life “is a grave and moral wrong.” They cite Bible verses including Jeremiah 1:4-5 and Psalm 139:13-16 that teach of God’s plan for individuals long before they are born and Luke 1:39-44, the story of how the pre-born John the Baptist “leaped for joy” in his mother’s womb at news Mary was pregnant with Jesus.

In the latter text, the brief explains, “the inspired author of the Scripture uses the same word to describe the ‘baby’ ... as is used to describe an infant who has been born, and affirms the personhood of the baby in the womb by ascribing to him the quintessentially human emotion of ‘joy.’”

“A fundamental aspect of Christian doctrine is its requirement that faith must govern every aspect of a Christian’s life,” the brief argues. “As a matter of scriptural command, conscience, Protestant tradition and Southern Baptist teaching, the exercise of the Christian religion must guide and determine a Christian’s decisions, words and deeds in every facet of life, including seemingly mundane and ‘secular’ matters like the administration of insurance and the provision of certain drugs and devices.”