

GuideStone injunction blocks abortion mandate

December 23, 2013

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—A federal district judge issued a preliminary injunction Dec. 20 against a government mandate that requires employers—including some religiously affiliated ones—to provide contraceptive drugs and devices they believe cause abortions.

Although churches and closely related ministries are exempt from the mandate of the [Affordable Care Act](#), many Christian universities, children's homes and other ministries were not exempted.



O. S. Hawkins Federal District Judge Timothy DeGiusti's ruling means organizations that use health plans through [GuideStone Financial Resources](#)—the Southern Baptist Convention's insurance and retirement agency—will be protected from a mandate to provide abortion-inducing drugs or devices. A trial date to make a final decision has not yet been set.

O.S. Hawkins, president of GuideStone Financial Resources, said the ruling by the Oklahoma City federal judge “reflects common-sense legal principles, respects the rights of religious institutions to provide benefits

consistent with their convictions, and provides needed relief from the government's attempt to co-opt ministry health plans."

"We appreciate Judge DeGiusti's timely protection of religious liberty and give thanks to God for this victory and for the many thousands who have made this a matter of prayer," Hawkins said.

Only concerns abortion-inducing drugs

Hawkins noted that the injunction only concerns abortion-inducing drugs and devices, not other contraceptives.

"While our Catholic friends oppose contraceptive in most every form—a belief that they should be free to exercise under the First Amendment—our plans reflect the convictions of most Southern Baptists and evangelicals that the use of contraceptives is a matter of personal conscience," Hawkins said. "Our plans will continue to provide coverage for the vast majority of FDA-approved drugs that do not cause abortions."

Russell Moore, president of the SBC's [Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission](#), called the injunction a "first step toward a historic win for religious liberty."

"A government that can coerce the conscience is a government that had overstepped its God-appointed bounds," Moore said. "We are thankful for Guidestone and the gospel grit of President O.S. Hawkins. We're still early in this fight, but this is good news."

Other groups involved

The ruling also encompasses [Truett-McConnell College](#), a Georgia Baptist Convention-affiliated school, and [Reaching Souls International](#), an Oklahoma-based missions organization.

"We are pleased to see that Judge DeGiusti, along with many other courts,

is recognizing these mandates go too far,” said Emir Caner, Truett-McConnell’s president. “We join with our partners in ministry at Reaching Souls and GuideStone in celebrating this ruling and praising the Lord for this outcome.”

Dustin Manis, CEO of Reaching Souls International, said the ruling “protects our ministry from this offensive, objectionable and onerous requirement. We pray this injunction will lead to an eventual full repeal of the abortion-drug mandate and continued protections for religious organizations under the First Amendment.”

One of nearly 90 lawsuits

This case is one of nearly 90 lawsuits brought against the abortion-drug mandate. Hawkins urged likeminded Christians to continue to pray for these cases as they wind through the courts.

“Whether the cases relate to family businesses like Hobby Lobby or for nonprofit ministries like GuideStone, the religious freedom concerns cannot be overstated,” Hawkins said. “It’s time for Christians to stay informed, get involved and pray for wisdom for all in authority.”