

Supreme court: Some companies don't have to cover birth control

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U.S. Supreme Court Justices.
Photo courtesy: C-SPAN

Victory for 2 family-owned firms that said Obamacare requirement violated their religious beliefs.

(HealthDay)—Family-owned companies don't have to comply with a provision of the Affordable Care Act that requires them to offer insurance coverage for contraception if that requirement violates their religious principles, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Monday.

The 5-4 decision was in response to lawsuits filed by two companies—Hobby Lobby Stores Inc. and Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp.—that argued that the Affordable Care Act's birth control provision ran counter to their religious views.

Hobby Lobby Stores is owned by the Green family, who are evangelical Christians. The Oklahoma-based company—with more than 15,000 full-time workers in approximately 600 stores in 41 states—and the Green family said their "religious beliefs prohibit them from providing health

coverage for contraceptive drugs and devices that end human life after conception," the *Associated Press* reported.

Pennsylvania-based Conestoga Wood Specialties is owned by a Mennonite family. The company makes wood cabinets and has 950 employees.

The contraceptive methods opposed by the two companies include the emergency contraceptives Plan B and ella, and two intrauterine devices (IUDs). The companies said they objected to such birth-control measures because they block a fertilized egg's ability to attach to the uterus.

Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties said they were willing to cover contraceptives that don't involve a fertilized egg, the *AP* said.

Nearly 50 other businesses had joined the lawsuit, the *AP* reported.

The Supreme Court emphasized that Monday's ruling only applies to companies under the control of just a few people where there's no real difference between the business and its owners—basically, family-owned companies, the news service said.

Justice Samuel Alito wrote the majority opinion. He said the decision is confined to contraceptives under the [health care law](#), the *AP* reported. "Our decision should not be understood to hold that an insurance-coverage mandate must necessarily fall if it conflicts with an employer's religious beliefs," he said.

The New York Times reported that the ruling raises the possibility of challenges from other companies to laws that may be said to violate their [religious beliefs](#).

The Supreme Court's decision is the first time that the high court has ruled that profit-seeking businesses can hold [religious views](#) under federal law. And it leaves the Obama administration looking for a different way of providing free contraception to women who are covered under objecting companies' health insurance plans, the *AP* reported.

Under the Affordable Care Act, the controversial health-reform law signed by President Barack Obama in 2010, contraception is among preventive services that must be provided at no extra charge.

Numerous groups—including approximately 200 Catholic employers, archdioceses and organizations—had been granted a temporary exemption from the contraception provision, pending the Supreme Court's decision.

In March, the Catholic Benefits Association—which includes archdioceses, an insurance [company](#) and a nursing home across almost 2,000 Catholic parishes nationwide—filed a lawsuit stating that the provision was a violation of its religious objections to contraception and abortion-inducing drugs, the *AP* reported.

Under the Affordable Care Act, sometimes called Obamacare, health plans must offer at no extra charge all forms of birth control for women that have been approved by federal regulators.

More information: To learn more about the Affordable Care Act's contraception provision, visit [HealthCare.gov](#).

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