

Supreme Court to take up birth control religion case

26 November 2013

The US Supreme Court said Tuesday it will take up a case involving a firm seeking to limit the availability of birth control to female employees enrolled in a company health plan on religious grounds.

The court's nine justices announced they would hear arguments soon in the case between the US government and a chain of home decor stores which refuses to purchase [health coverage](#) covering certain contraceptive methods.

The Obama administration is challenging the refusal of Hobby Lobby Stores to underwrite coverage for certain [contraceptive methods](#).

The family-owned chain based in Oklahoma says it manages its business "in a manner consistent with biblical principles."

"We believe that it is by God's grace and provision that Hobby Lobby has endured. He has been faithful in the past, and we trust Him for our future," it says on its website.

Joined by the religious bookstore Mardel, Hobby Lobby has refused to abide by the new health care law's requirement that it provide [health insurance coverage](#) for four methods of contraception (two abortive pills and two types of IUDs), or pay a fine.

The chain has not challenged other methods agreed to by the federal government—contraceptive pills, diaphragms and other barrier methods—but it objects to the four specific methods on grounds they are comparable to abortion.

In a brief filed with the court, the company argued that "by providing insurance coverage for contraceptives that could prevent a human embryo from implanting in the uterus, they themselves would be morally complicit in 'the death of [an] embryo.'"

A [federal appeals court](#) agreed, ruling that the legal requirement was counter to the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

The Obama [health care law](#) exempted churches and other religious organizations from having to provide coverage for [birth control](#).

But the government argued that "no court has ever found a for-profit company to be a religious organization for purposes of federal law.

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APA citation: Supreme Court to take up birth control religion case (2013, November 26) retrieved 3 December 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-11-supreme-court-birth-religion-case.html>

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