

The Right to Practice Faith in Business

USCCB Fact Sheet

2017

The Green family began what became **Hobby Lobby Stores**, a retail chain of arts and crafts stores, out of a garage in the family's home in Oklahoma. The Hahn family began **Conestoga Wood Specialties**, a cabinet-making business, out of a garage in the family's home in Pennsylvania.

The Greens are evangelical Christians who strive to operate Hobby Lobby in a manner consistent with biblical principles. Hobby Lobby pays full-time employees at **almost double the minimum wage**, offers generous health benefits, and allows employees ample time off from work. The Hahns, who are Mennonite, similarly strive to operate Conestoga Wood in a way that honors their faith.

Both the Hahns and the Greens believe that **life begins at conception**, and their religious beliefs prohibit them from facilitating abortion.

Unfortunately, a mandate from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) tried to compel the Greens and the Hahns to cover certain drugs and devices that can end life after conception. Coverage of these drugs and devices was required in the companies' health plans under threat of severe fines by the federal government.

The Greens and the Hahns were forced to sue the federal government to vindicate their rights under the U.S. Constitution and federal law to exercise religion. They argued that **Americans do not give up their freedom when they open family businesses.**

The U.S. Supreme Court decided on June 30, 2014 that closely held businesses like Hobby Lobby and Conestoga can exercise religion under the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a law that passed Congress nearly unanimously and was enthusiastically signed into law by Pres. Bill Clinton in 1993. The Court also found that the HHS mandate constitutes an unjustified, substantial burden because of the millions of dollars in annual fines that both companies would face if they did not comply with it.

The U.S. bishops have voiced their strong support for families like the Greens and the Hahns. The bishops filed a friend-of-the-court brief with the U.S. Supreme Court supporting Hobby Lobby and Conestoga in their challenge to the HHS mandate.

The bishops explained that they oppose "any rule that would require faithful Catholics and other religiously motivated business owners to choose between providing coverage for products and speech that violate their religious beliefs, and exposing their businesses to devastating penalties." The bishops have repeatedly voiced their concern for faithful people in business so that they can continue to live out their faith in daily life.

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