

Hobby Lobby Attorney 'Encouraged' After Abortion- Pill Appeal Hearing

Hobby Lobby has taken the next step in its abortion-pill mandate case. The Christian-owned-and-operated chain run by the David Green family asked a federal appeals court Thursday in Denver for an exemption from part of the health-care law that requires it to offer an insurance plan that covers "morning-after" and "week-after" pills.

Following the en banc hearing before the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, Kyle Duncan, general counsel for The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and counsel on the case, said: "We are encouraged by today's hearing before the full 10th Circuit Court of Appeals. Being heard before all eight judges—rather than the typical three-judge panel—signifies the importance of the case and the arguments being made. We stand firm in our belief that Hobby Lobby should have the right to opt out of a provision that infringes on their religious beliefs, and we look forward to a favorable outcome."

A U.S. Department of Justice lawyer argued that allowing for-profit corporations an exemption from requirements that violate their religious beliefs would be, in effect, allowing the business to impose its religious beliefs on employees, Fox News reported.

"If you make an exemption for the employer, it comes at the expense of the employee," said Alisa Klein, who argued on behalf of the government in a similar case Wednesday in the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

In December, a two-judge panel of the 10th Circuit denied Hobby Lobby's request to temporarily stop enforcement of the abortion-pill mandate.

The 10th Circuit judges did not say when they would make a ruling on the appeal.

Oklahoma City-based Hobby Lobby has more than 500 stores in 41 states. One of the tenets of the chain's statement of purpose is, "Honoring the Lord in all we do by operating the company in a manner consistent with biblical principles."

The Green family also runs Mardel Christian & Education stores.