

# RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AFFIRMED

The June 30 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores* is a smashing victory for religious liberty.

Though there is reason for joy, Bill Donohue cautions against celebrating too early. Indeed, he advises that more must be done now to ensure our First Amendment rights. Because of the unremitting hostility the Obama administration has shown to religious liberty, especially in its lust for abortion rights, Donohue says, Congress needs to pass the Health Care Rights of Conscience Act.

The Hobby Lobby ruling has important implications. It recognizes, for the first time, that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) applies to “closely held” businesses, or corporations owned by a few people. This law prohibits the federal government from any action that substantially burdens the exercise of religion, unless that action is the least restrictive way of serving a compelling government interest.

Practically speaking, the ruling will have a limited effect on private sector employers. The vast majority of Americans work for companies that already provide for most forms of contraceptive coverage, including abortifacients. Nonetheless, this decision will further disable ObamaCare: Over 100 million are already exempt, and now we can add “Hobby Lobby” type businesses to the list. Not for nothing does Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg fear that this ruling may cause “havoc” to ObamaCare. Hope she’s right.

Politically speaking, the ruling will have a dramatic effect: it sends an unmistakable message to the Obama administration that it cannot continue to run roughshod over the religious liberty rights of Americans.

Critics of Hobby Lobby have been trotting out horror stories

about what will happen if their side loses. This is all nonsense. RFRA was passed 21 years ago, and no horror stories have been recorded. Scare tactics don't work.

Next up are the Catholic non-profits. Sometime in the next session of the Supreme Court, the Justices will decide to hear a case involving the Health and Human Services mandate ordering Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their health care policies.

Most of the Catholic non-profits have won in the lower courts, but we have lost some cases, too. The good news is that the Hobby Lobby case bodes well: if for-profit family-run businesses cannot be forced to pay for abortifacients, then it is highly unlikely that Catholic schools, hospitals, and social service agencies will be forced to cover them.