

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES
DATE: MARCH 24, 2014
RE: WOMEN VOTERS' REACTION TO RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

Overview of Key Findings

Our new national survey of 1,004 women voters between the ages of 18 and 55 shows that a large majority strongly object to the religious exemptions for corporations that are being sought in the *Hobby Lobby* case.

- Women voters consistently and overwhelmingly disagree with the idea that corporations should be able to exempt themselves from observing laws because those laws violate their religious beliefs.
- Women age 55 and younger specifically reject corporations' claims that they should be exempted from covering prescription birth control in their health plans because of religious objections to contraception.
- Democrats and independents reject these claims overwhelmingly, while Republicans are divided evenly.

These findings—underscoring strong objections to religious exemptions for corporations—are consistent with other public polls on the topic that show that more than half of all voters oppose allowing employers to opt out of covering prescription birth control in their health plans as required under the Affordable Care Act.

1. More than two in three (68%) women voters say that corporations should not be able to exempt themselves from the requirement of covering prescription birth control in their health plans if they object to contraception on religious grounds. More than half of women characterize their opposition to this exemption as strong.

In fact, this sentiment is so overwhelming that it includes a majority of women in every major demographic and attitudinal subgroup, with the exception of strong Republicans:

Should corporations be allowed to exempt themselves from the requirement of covering prescription birth control in their health plans if they object to birth control on religious grounds?

	Should Not %	<u>Should</u> %	Margin of <u>Support</u> %
All women voters 18-55	68	32	+36
18-29 year olds	66	34	+32
30-39 year olds	67	33	+34
40-55 year olds	71	29	+42
All non-college graduates	70	30	+40
All college graduates	65	35	+30
Whites	68	32	+36
African Americans	70	30	+40
Hispanics	75	25	+50
Democrats	79	21	+58
Independents	72	28	+44
Republicans	50	50	0

2. Women voters’ strong feelings about corporations not being exempt from the birth control provision is grounded in a solid and durable rejection of the broader argument that corporations should be exempt from any law because of their religious beliefs.

Fully 72% of women voters say that corporations should not be allowed to exempt themselves from obeying a law if they feel the law goes against their religious beliefs. More specifically:

- Eighty-one percent (81%) say businesses should not be able to refuse service to gays and lesbians on the basis of religious objections to homosexuality;
- Seventy-nine percent (79%) say corporations should not be allowed to refuse to hire gays and lesbians on the basis of religious objections to homosexuality;
- Eighty-one percent (81%) say pharmacies should not be allowed to refuse to fill prescriptions for birth control because of religious objections to contraception.

For more detailed insights about women voters’ many reasons for opposing these exemptions, please see Table A at the end of this memo.

Hart Research Associates

3. Women voters identify an array of reasons for why they oppose religious exemptions for corporations on the birth control provision, including concerns about employers' interference in personal decisions, the limits of corporate rights, and the practical implications such exemptions would have on women in their daily lives.

Women voters reject the claim of corporations like Hobby Lobby on many bases and say that each of the following is very or fairly convincing to them:

	<u>Very Convincing</u>	<u>Total Convincing</u>
	%	%
The decision about using birth control should be a woman's personal decision and her boss should not be able to interfere with it.	71	84
Women take birth control pills for a variety of medical reasons other than to prevent pregnancy. Women should not be forced to explain to their employers their medical reasons for needing prescription birth control.	67	82
Corporations should not be able to pick and choose which laws they obey.	61	75
Having affordable access to birth control is important to women, and requiring women to pay up to \$500 a year out of their pockets for prescription birth control would be a hardship for many women, especially women who work in lower-wage jobs.	56	73
We should not give corporations that have nothing to do with religion the right to exempt themselves from obeying certain laws on religious grounds.	49	70

At the same time, women voters are not especially persuaded by the case that corporations like Hobby Lobby make about why they should not have to comply with the provision to cover birth control in their employees' health plans. While more than seven in ten women find each of the above arguments against the exemption convincing, just over one in three (including 40% of Catholic women) say the same about the argument advanced by corporations like Hobby Lobby, even when this claim invokes religious freedom:

	<u>Very Convincing</u>	<u>Total Convincing</u>
	%	%
Religious freedom is a core American principle. The government should not force businesses to do things that violate their religious convictions. No employer should be required to cover birth control in their company's health plan if birth control goes against their religious faith.	18	37

- 4. Consistent with other public polling, women voters are overwhelmingly supportive of the provision of the ACA that health plans cover preventive services with no additional copay, including birth control.**

On these two points, the consensus is so strong that a majority of women in every major demographic and attitudinal group agree, including Republicans.

Fully 93% of women voters favor the requirement that health plans cover preventive health services with no additional copays, including:

- 96% of Democrats
- 95% of independents
- 87% of Republicans.

And more than four in five (81%) women voters agree with the policy that prescription birth control should be covered as a preventive health service with no additional copay, including:

- 92% of Democrats
- 83% of independents
- 63% of Republicans

- 79% of Catholics

Table A

Examples of verbatim responses: *What are your biggest concerns, if any, about allowing corporations to exempt themselves from obeying a law if they feel the law goes against their religious beliefs?*

A corporation is not a person and should allow the people who work for them to make their own choices.

The law is the law, it's meant to be followed. This is a nation of the free, you can believe whatever you want to but as soon as you infringe on the rights of others, you are in the wrong.

Corporations cannot hold beliefs. They are not individuals. Affording corporations the right to be exempted de facto institutionalizes discrimination.

[I am concerned] that they will pick and choose things that in reality have little to do with their religion and more to do with their petty prejudices.

As long as a corporation is engaged in commerce for the purpose of earning a profit, then it should be subject to the same laws as ALL corporations.

It is my strong opinion that, as a business, personal views should not be allowed to interfere with laws and discrimination.

Corporations are in business to provide a service to people, not all of whom share the same religious beliefs.

I'm afraid that if we allow corporations to exempt themselves that they will try to then force their views on their workers. Just because the corporation doesn't agree with a certain part of the bill doesn't mean their employees don't and the employees shouldn't be forced to miss out just because someone who owns a corporation/has a lot of money disagrees with the law.

Where does it end? What other law goes against their 'religious beliefs'? I firmly believe in a person's right to practice his/her religion but I also firmly believe in the separation of church and state.

Corporations themselves should not even have religious beliefs. Our law allows for individuals to have the freedom to worship how they choose, not corporations. This is another example of corporations picking and choosing when they want to have personhood.

It opens the door to more discrimination and exclusion. It truly makes me feel as if the country is going backwards.

Religion has no place in the work place. No one should have to worry about job security because their belief system differs from their employers.