

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
FROM: HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES
DATE: JULY 25, 2014
RE: WOMEN VOTERS' REACTION TO THE HOBBY LOBBY SUPREME COURT VERDICT

Overview of Key Findings

Our most recent national survey of 1,083 women voters between the ages of 18 and 55 reveals that a large majority oppose the Supreme Court's decision on the *Hobby Lobby* case. Just as notably, this critical segment of the electorate is closely following and highly motivated by the issue of so-called "religious objections" that allow employers to deny women coverage for certain forms of birth control. Further, these findings demonstrate that much of the groundwork is in place for organized political engagement on this issue:

- Women overwhelmingly disagree with the general notion that corporations should be able to exempt themselves from laws they feel go against their religious beliefs.
- A solid majority of women in this voting bloc say they oppose the *Hobby Lobby* decision that for-profit companies can exempt themselves from the requirement to cover birth control if the owner of the company has a religious objection to it, and these women voters are following the debate—a solid majority also say they've heard a lot or a fair amount about the case.
- Nearly three in four (72%) women say this issue is very or fairly important to them personally, and a solid majority say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who opposes such exemptions.
- This critical voting bloc of women rejects the very premise that these types of refusals can be described accurately as "religious exceptions," and instead, women voters express concerns about basic fairness for all women, as well as establishing a precedent for other forms of discrimination.

1. More than seven in ten (71%) women voters object to the idea of for-profit corporations being allowed to exempt themselves from a law they feel goes against their religious beliefs; in fact, this sentiment is so overwhelming that it is shared by a majority of every demographic and attitudinal audience, including Democrats (82%), independents (73%), and Republicans (52%).

- There is similarly near-uniform support for covering prescription birth control as a preventive health service with no copay—82% of women voters in this cohort agree, including 95% of Democrats, 82% of independents, and 63% of Republicans. Moreover, with a strong 57% majority of women characterizing their agreement with this policy as strong there, is real intensity behind their support.

2. Not only do a solid majority of women voters in this cohort oppose the Supreme Court's ruling on *Hobby Lobby*, but these women voters also say they are paying attention to news about the decision and say the issue is important to them personally.

- Fifty-eight percent (58%) of women oppose the Supreme Court's ruling that owners of for-profit companies can refuse to provide birth control if doing so would violate their religious beliefs, including fully 73% of Democrats and 60% of independents. Even among Republican women in this cohort, there are considerable divisions— more than one in three (35%) Republicans say they oppose the decision.
- A majority of women (59%) say they have heard or read a great deal or fair amount about the decision, with an additional 25% saying they have heard or read a little about it. Remarkably, in an era of heightened news diffusion where voters are not relying on a small or common set of news sources, only 16% of women report not having heard or read anything about the decision. Even among the hard-to-reach cohort of 18-to-29-year-olds, there is a significant level of attentiveness—fully 65% of these younger women say they've heard a great deal or a fair amount about the case.
- Over seven in ten (72%) women describe this issue as something that is very or fairly important to them personally (43% very, 29% fairly). It is an especially high priority for women under the age of 30 (83% very/fairly important), unmarried women (76% very/fairly important), and African American and Hispanic audiences (both 83% very/fairly important). Among women who say they're following news about the upcoming midterm elections (the group that is at this time more likely

to vote this fall), fully 78% describe this as a very or fairly important personal issue.

3. This level of engagement has real potential to translate into political and electoral action—as these findings demonstrate, women voters make important judgments about elected leaders based on their stance on this issue, and they also say they are more likely to support candidates who oppose the *Hobby Lobby* decision.

- When asked to describe their reaction to elected leaders who stand in support of the *Hobby Lobby* ruling (that employers should be allowed to refuse to cover prescription birth control in their health plans):
 - Seventy-one percent (71%) of women say these leaders are focused on the wrong issues and priorities.
 - Sixty-eight percent (68%) of women say that these leaders are out of touch with them and the everyday lives of women.
- In looking toward November, a strong majority (57%) of women voters say they would be more likely to support a candidate who opposes allowing employers to refuse to cover birth control. Remarkably, 51% of women voters say they feel strongly about this preference. And notably, by 55% to 20%, independents say they are more likely to support a candidate who opposes these exemptions over a candidate who favors them; even among Republican women voters, there is a near even divide, with 34% saying they prefer a candidate who opposes these exceptions and 38% saying they prefer a candidate who supports these exceptions. This remains true for both women under the age of 30 where 55% (50% strongly) say they are more likely to support a candidate who opposes these exceptions, as well as 63% of unmarried women (57% strongly).

4. Women voters identify an array of reasons for opposing the *Hobby Lobby* decision—including women’s right to make these personal decisions for themselves without interference from their employers, as well as basic fairness concerns that certain forms of women’s birth control would be singled out, while coverage for vasectomies and Viagra are not flagged for debate.

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>
	%	%
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 employer their medical reasons for needing prescription birth control.	60	77
The decision about using birth control should be a woman’s personal decision—employers should not be able to decide what forms of birth control should or should not be covered.	60	76
It’s not fair for companies to provide coverage for men such as Viagra, but refuse to cover certain prescription birth control methods for women.	56	73
It’s not fair for companies to provide birth control for men such as vasectomies, but refuse to cover certain prescription birth control methods for women.	54	72
Having affordable access to birth control is important to women, and requiring women to pay up to \$600 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.	52	71
Corporations should not be able to pick and choose which laws they obey.	56	70

5. In considering these cases, women voters reject the common vernacular of “religious exceptions” in describing the claims of for-profit companies and employers.

Women voters were presented with different ways of framing or describing the debate about this issue. Whether the objection to these exemptions is rooted in creating a loophole for companies to discriminate against employees and even customers for engaging in behavior they disapprove of, or it is rooted in the lack of fairness for women who would have different rules and benefits depending on their boss’s personal views, a solid 62% of women voters say that it not accurate to describe these as a “religious exemptions” because for-profit companies don’t have religious beliefs.

6. Finally, women voters overwhelmingly describe the current accommodation for religious organizations under the ACA (the basis for the *Wheaton College v. Burwell* case) as acceptable and reasonable.

Fully two in three women (67%) say that it is reasonable that religious institutions must file an exemption form if they object to providing prescription birth control; just one in three (33%) say that this requirement is unreasonable. Notably, 66% of Catholic women describe this accommodation as reasonable.