

The *Skyline Church* Case

Case Name: *Skyline Wesleyan Church v. CA Dept. of Managed Health Care*

Case Status: Oral Arguments in U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit on Nov. 4, 2019.

Significance: Whether the state can force churches to pay for abortions.



Background: Since its founding in 1954, Skyline Wesleyan Church has ministered to thousands of people in the San Diego area. Skyline Church believes it has a religious obligation to care for its employees, and it offers them a generous health insurance plan. Skyline also believes that every human life is sacred from conception to natural death, so it purchased an employee healthcare plan that excluded elective abortion consistent with its religious beliefs. But in August 2014, the California Department of Managed Health Care rescinded existing religious accommodations and mandated immediate coverage of all legal abortions, forcing churches like Skyline to pay for abortions through their insurance plans. Unelected bureaucrats in the state of California have bent over backwards to please Planned Parenthood and other abortion advocates—even though it meant forcing churches to pay for abortions against their deeply held beliefs. After the church filed a complaint against the department, a California district court denied the church’s request for relief. The church then appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit and is asking it to reverse the district court ruling.

Key Points

- Churches have the freedom to set internal policies about prioritizing the protection of human life, from conception to natural death. The Constitution protects that freedom.
- It is wrong to force a church or anyone else to participate in funding abortion.
- The state of California should not force Skyline to violate its faith in order to provide quality healthcare to its staff members.

Key Facts

- Skyline believes that every human life is valuable and deserving of protection and that abortion is incompatible with this belief. Skyline only employs church members who share its beliefs.
- The state of California has gone out of its way to force pro-life churches to pay for abortions through their insurance plans. The state had evidence that its mandate would only affect religious organizations.
- This anti-religious hostility is a new low, and violates the Free Exercise Clause by targeting the religious exercise of churches.
- The Supreme Court has consistently held that government hostility towards people of faith is unconstitutional and has no place in our society.

The Bottom Line: The government should not force a church to violate its beliefs by paying for abortions.