The Affordable Care Act (2010) requires that insurance companies provide contraception, a preventative health care service, to women at no cost. The UUA continues to applaud the Affordable Care Act (and this contraception mandate) as the single most important piece of legislation reducing gender- and race-based health inequalities. However, more than 40 for-profit companies have sued the federal government because they claim that their corporations must follow certain religious laws and make these health care decisions for their female employees.

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear two of these cases brought by Hobby Lobby Inc and Conestoga Wood Specialties on March 25. The UUA is working to ensure that the Supreme Court and the general public know of our religious support for widespread access to contraception as a human right, and to bring a broader and truer frame to these conversations about religious freedom.

Talking Points On Accessible Birth Control:
- Unitarian Universalists and millions of other people ground their moral commitment to family planning in their religious beliefs. We believe that inherent worth and dignity, the right of conscience, and respect for human life are rights due to every person.
- Progressive faith traditions, including Unitarian Universalism, affirm that parenthood and sexuality are sacred gifts. The denial of equitable access to family planning services effectively translates into coercive childbearing which is an affront to one’s moral agency and an insult to human dignity.
- Ensuring that all women, regardless of the religious convictions of their boss, have access to key preventative contraceptive services is essential not only to women’s health but also to other rights of women including religious liberty, equality, and economic security – fundamental values of Unitarian Universalism’s prophetic witness. We continue to support the Affordable Care Act in helping to ensure a more just, compassionate, and equitable society.
- UUA GA Statements: (earliest statement mentioning contraception: 1962)
  - Right to Choose (1987)
  - Others

Talking Points On Religious Freedom:
- The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) of 1993 protects the free exercise of belief, practice, and conscience of an individual believer. Unlike a corporation, individuals have real healthcare needs, consciences, and personal religious convictions – every worker deserves to have their health needs and religious liberty respected and protected.
- Contrary to plaintiff’s assertions, it is the worker’s religious freedom and conscience at stake in these cases. A boss has no right to use their own religious teachings to dictate
how an employee may use their healthcare coverage. Likewise, allowing a corporation or boss to skirt public law by claiming a religious offense inherently privileges one set of beliefs, endangering a host a number of employment laws like minimum wage, standard working conditions, or non-discrimination policies, undermining the rule of law writ large.

- Unitarian Universalists, by holding a minority religious identity in the United States, know that real religious liberty means that each person must be able to exercise their own religious beliefs freely and make decisions according to their own conscience. For many women, the right to purchase birth control is meaningless without insurance coverage to do so, just as the right to personal religious preferences is meaningless without the ability to practice those beliefs safely in community.

- Religious institutions – houses of worship, societies, schools, etc. – exist to cultivate sacred community grounded in shared beliefs. By contrast, a corporation provides commodities for a profit. The plaintiffs in these cases seek to equate a corporation’s standing to that of a religious entity or an individual believer. Such an assertion cheapens the meaning of religion and the sanctity of spiritual communities, which, for Unitarian Universalists and people of faith, is deeply troubling.

- UUA GA Statements: (earliest statement on religious freedom: 1963)
  - Others

Other UU Specific Information:
- UUA’s reproductive justice webpages
  - Summary page on Supreme Court reproductive justice cases
  - UUA’s 4-year commitment to study and action on Reproductive Justice (CSAI)
- Amicus Brief (like a coalition sign-on letter but for judicial proceedings) to the Supreme Court from the faith community, including the UUA
- UU congregations or clergy in the news on reproductive justice issues (selection from Nov 2013-Jan 2014):
  - “Domestic Violence survivors share stories in Burlington” 11/1/2013
  - “Reproductive Rights Rally Takes Aim at Upcoming Kentucky General Assembly Session” 11/2/2013
  - “Don’t make an idol of ideology” 11/10/2013
  - “Reproductive justice is Sunday Forum topic” 11/23/2013
  - “Truth and Meaning: The War on Women Continues” 12/7/2013
  - “Prison practice shocks: Women shackled during childbirth” 12/14/2013
  - “Eno River donation” 12/17/2013
  - “Tolerant of all faiths” (op-ed by Rev. Charlie Archibald) 1/10/2014
  - “Ballot initiative would deprive women of reproductive healthcare” (op-ed by Rev. Laura Bogle) 1/18/2014
  - “Reproductive justice series begins at UU Congregation of Columbus” 1/24/2014
  - “Louisiana seeks to make new abortion restrictions permanent” 1/28/2014