THE GOOD CITIZEN PROJECT

7 FACTS ABOUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE MARKETPLACE

Christians in the marketplace face consistent pressure to privatize or even compromise their beliefs. As proven by recent events, business owners or employees who live out their beliefs at work face the greatest risk of adverse employment decisions and other hostile legal action. Here are seven facts every Christian business owner or employee should know:

#1 Small businesses have First Amendment rights.
According to the 2014 *Hobby Lobby* decision, First Amendment rights apply to small or family-owned businesses as well as to individuals. Therefore, the federal government cannot burden the sincerely held religious beliefs or rights of conscience of a privately owned business unless the government has a very important reason for doing so and acts in the least intrusive manner. Many states have similar provisions. Government also has no business in analyzing the "reasonableness" of the religious beliefs of a business.

#2 For-profit companies may promote religious causes and values.
The 2014 *Hobby Lobby* case also clearly stated that for-profit organizations may do more than hold religious beliefs—they may actually promote them in their business and in the public square. As long as the owners of a business agree, a business is generally free to pursue any lawful purpose including religious purposes. Many large corporations that embrace a more secular ideology routinely support "progressive" causes internally and publicly, and Christian businesses have every right to do the same.

#3 Businesses may not discriminate on the basis of religion.
Employers (other than religious organizations) may not hire or fire employees because of sincerely held religious beliefs, and employers may not use religion as the basis for a decision to promote (or not promote) an employee. Federal and state laws also require most businesses to take steps to stop religious harassment of employees.

#4 Businesses must make accommodations for religious beliefs.
Businesses must reasonably accommodate the religious beliefs of an employee unless doing so would cause an undue hardship on the business. Further, businesses may not force an employee to participate in or to "refrain from participating" in a religious event.

#5 Business owners may hold bible studies or prayer meetings.
Business owners or employees may promote and hold Bible studies or other religious events, but a business owner should clarify in any posted notice or communications that the study or event is not required as a condition of employment (see #4). Business leaders

should consider scheduling such meetings before the start of business day or on a scheduled break to avoid the appearance of mandatory attendance.

#6 Business owners and employees may share their faith at work.

Business owners and employees are free to share their faith at work. Business owners should be careful not to give the impression that employment or advancement in the business is conditioned on a particular response to their efforts. Employees may legally share their faith as long as the employee's efforts do not work an undue hardship on the business.

#7 Business owners will determine their right to faith in the marketplace.

Christians endeavoring to do everything—including their work—for God's glory (I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:23-24) are consistently facing harsh scrutiny and even persecution for their religious beliefs. The willingness of these Christians to strongly and winsomely stand for what they believe will set the tone for legal efforts to defend Christian ministries and churches and will help determine the future of religious freedom.

The Good Citizen Project equips Christians to be gospel-centered citizens in post-Christian America.

Request help via email: info@goodcitizen.us or by phone: 812-493-9096.

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