



Focus on Religious Freedom

"The liberty enjoyed by the people of these States of worshipping Almighty God, agreeable to their consciences, is not only among the choicest of their blessings, but also of their rights." - George Washington

Sister Deidre Byrne, Surgeon, and Gerald Groff, Postal Carrier, Forced to Sue for Their Religious Liberty to Continue Their Work

"I can't practice. I've closed my clinics for the month. I can't see my patients. I just can't help anyone," said Sister Dierdre Byrne, a board-certified physician-surgeon and retired U.S. Army colonel. ⁽¹⁾ "Sr. Dierdre has sought - and been denied - a religious exemption from DC's health worker COVID-19 vaccination mandate," explained Thomas More Society in their March 9, 2022, lawsuit. "All three COVID-19 vaccines approved in the U.S. have been tested, developed, or produced with cell lines derived from abortions, something to which Sr. Dierdre has deep and sincere religious opposition." ⁽²⁾ "The suit against (Mayor) Bowser and DC Health (the district's health department) is based upon the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, both of which protect Sr. Dierdre's fundamental right to the free exercise of her religion," said attorney Christopher Ferrara. ⁽³⁾

A few days later, Sister Dierdre was notified by letter that her license was now once again active until September but that, "If at a later date the director finds that it is in the best interest of public health, the exemption granted to you may be rescinded." ⁽⁴⁾ The issues in the lawsuit were not resolved and were replaced by a new standard: "You can practice until we say otherwise." ⁽⁵⁾

"No American should be forced to choose between their religion and their job," said First Liberty Counsel, defending Postal Carrier Gerald Groff, an Evangelical Christian, who was denied a religious accommodation and forced to work on Sundays, which is against his deeply held religious beliefs requiring him to honor the Sabbath. ⁽⁶⁾ "USPS should have recognized Gerald's deeply held religious beliefs ..." ⁽⁷⁾ After an accommodation was denied, Gerald resigned from his position and filed a federal lawsuit arguing that he had been a victim of discrimination in that the postal service failed to provide an appropriate accommodation. ⁽⁸⁾ The Third Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in January and this religious freedom case awaits a decision.

Hope for Religious Revival Continues

Many churches in many states have begun planning and promoting "Religious Revival" in their communities. A recent campaign comes from Woonsocket, Rhode Island as the Firm Foundation Christian Church invites all to their Spring Revival in May, 2022, as they proclaim, "Be a part of what God is doing." ⁽⁹⁾

(thomasmoresociety.org, 3/10/22(1)(2); catholicnewsagency.com, 3/11/22(1)(3); nationalcatholicregister.com, 3/13/22(4)(5); firstliberty.org, 1/25/22(6)(7); law&crime.com, 1/26/22(8); patch.com, Rhode Island (9))

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Sister Deirdre Byrne, a board-certified physician-surgeon and retired U.S. Army colonel, had "sought - and been denied - a religious exemption from DCs health worker COVID-19 vaccination mandate," explained Thomas More Society in their March 9, 2022 lawsuit. "All three COVID-19 vaccines approved in the U.S. have been tested, developed, or produced with cell lines derived from abortions, something to which Sr. Deirdre has deep and sincere religious opposition." ⁽¹⁾

A few days later, Sr. Deirdre was notified her license was now active until September unless the director decided to rescind her exemption again.⁽²⁾

A religious exemption was denied to Postal Carrier Gerald Groff, an Evangelical Christian, who was forced to work on Sundays which is against his deeply held religious beliefs requiring him to honor the Sabbath. ⁽³⁾ The Third Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in January and this religious freedom case awaits a decision.

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