



## **AG ASKS APPEALS COURT TO OVERTURN RULING THAT RESTRICTED RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN EWTN CASE**

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange today filed a friend of the court brief asking the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit to overturn the U.S. District Court’s decision that restricted religious liberty in the case of Eternal Word Television Network v. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Alabama was the lead state in this brief, which was joined by the States of Florida and Georgia.

“I am proud to continue standing with EWTN to oppose this unconscionable mandate against its fundamental religious beliefs and liberties,” said Attorney General Strange. “I am committed to protect freedom of religion, which is our ‘first freedom’ under the U.S. Constitution. This is a basic right that the people of Alabama have enshrined in our own constitution as well. No one can be forced to offer a product that is against one’s religious beliefs or conscience.”

Attorney General Strange asks the Court to protect the religious liberty of Alabama citizens and religious non-profit ministries by reversing the district court’s ruling requiring EWTN and as a not-for-profit religious organization to comply with the Obamacare HHS mandate to provide contraception and abortion-inducing drug coverage in its employees’ health insurance plans.

Alabama, joined by Florida and Georgia, are asking the appeals court to “follow the Supreme Court’s lead and binding precedent” as set forth in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* “to conclude that the contraception mandate, as enforced through the federal government’s regulations, imposes a substantial burden on EWTN.” The brief asserts that “all three states have strong constitutional and statutory protections for religious freedom,” and “have a strong interest in maintaining the very broad protections for religious liberty in the federal RFRA (Religious Freedom Restoration Act).”

The brief argues that “religious freedom is a fundamental part of our society” and “states have an interest in creating a climate where diverse businesses and nonprofits, helmed by people of various faiths, thrive and create jobs.” The U.S. Supreme Court recently explained in the Hobby Lobby case that “citizens do not forfeit this freedom by participating in business.” The brief further argues that the district court incorrectly applied (failed to consider) whether the government had a compelling interest and whether it used the least restrictive means to further that interest. Therefore, the States argue, the lower court ruling should be reversed.

