

Former Postal Carrier Who Lost Job After USPS Refused Religious Accommodation Makes Case to Third Circuit

At oral argument, attorneys tell court USPS denial of religious accommodation to practice Sunday Sabbath violates federal law

Philadelphia, PA—Today, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit was urged to reverse a lower court decision that allowed the United States Postal Service (“USPS”) to force an employee, Gerald Groff, to work on Sundays. Groff lost his job as a postal carrier after the USPS refused to grant him an accommodation for Sunday Sabbath. First Liberty Institute, Baker Botts LLP, the Church State Council, the Cornerstone Law Firm, and the Independence Law Center represent Groff.

“No American should be forced to choose between their religion and their job,” said Hiram Sasser, Executive General Counsel at First Liberty. “Gerald was willing to work additional shifts on days other than Sunday, but his deeply held religious beliefs requiring him to honor the Sabbath. The USPS should have recognized Gerald’s sincerely held belief that he must observe the Sunday Sabbath and granted him a religious exemption.”

Gerald Groff was employed by the USPS beginning in 2012 at the Quarryville Post Office in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where he eventually became a Rural Carrier Associate. Groff believes he must “[r]emember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” and asked for a religious accommodation to observe Sunday Sabbath, which his supervisor initially granted. But when a conflict later arose between Groff’s duties as a mail carrier for USPS and his observance of the Sunday Sabbath, USPS offered only proposals that would still require Groff to work on Sundays and thereby violate his conscience. After losing his job, Groff sued. The district court sided with the USPS, concluding that a reasonable accommodation need not eliminate the conflict between work and religion and that accommodating Groff would pose an undue hardship on USPS.

Attorneys for Groff, including Aaron Streett of Baker Botts, Alan Reinach of the Church State Council, Randall Wenger of the Independence Law Center, and David Crossett of Cornerstone Law Firm, argue that, as a federal employee with USPS, Groff was protected by Title VII from discrimination based on his religious beliefs and practices. Consequently, USPS was obligated to provide an accommodation for his religious exercise.

Christopher Tutunjian of Baker Botts argued on behalf of Mr. Groff.

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](http://www.firstliberty.org) is a non-profit public interest law firm and the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNiel at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453.