Two private religious universities and a seminary launched the next wave of Affordable Care Act cases in the U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday, in a challenge stemming from the law's contraceptive insurance requirement.

In *Houston Baptist University v. Burwell*, the three challengers contend that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit was wrong when it found that the government's option for accommodating their religious objections to the contraceptive coverage did not substantially burden their exercise of religion in violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

Houston Baptist University, East Texas Baptist University and Pennsylvania-based Westminster Theological Seminary filed the petition for review, represented by Paul Clement of Bancroft and the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. Clement successfully argued *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* in 2014, in which a 5-4 high court held that the contraceptive insurance requirement violated the exercise of religion by closely held corporations and their religious owners.

The petition states that "hundreds of religious institutions representing a wide cross-section of organizations and faiths have brought lawsuits, some on behalf of entire classes of affected religious employers," seeking relief. Many were successful in the district courts but the Third, Fifth, Seventh and D.C. circuits found that compliance with the regulatory option did not violate RFRA.

"The Supreme Court should step in and tell the federal government that separation of church and state is a two-way street," said Diana Verm, legal counsel at the Becket Fund. "The state should not be able to take over parts of the church—including these religious ministries—just so it has an easier way of distributing life-terminating drugs."