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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ALLEGES OHIO AGENCIES DISCRIMINATE AGAINST STATE EMPLOYEES WHO OBJECT TO UNION DUES ON RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS

The U.S. Department of Justice has filed a federal court lawsuit alleging three state agencies discriminate against workers who cite religious beliefs in asking that fees paid in lieu of union dues go to charity instead of organized labor.

The complaint was filed last week in U.S. District Court, Columbus against the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Administrative Services, and State Employment Relations Board.

The state's collective bargaining law requires employees who choose not to become members of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association pay the union a representation service fee.

The suit cites the case of Glen Greenwood, an environmental specialist with the Ohio EPA, who unsuccessfully sought to have his "fair share fee" go to non-religious charity instead of the OCSEA.

Mr. Greenwood acknowledged that the Presbyterian Church of which he is a member has no historically held conscientious objections to joining or financially supporting a union. His personal religious objections were instead based on an understanding that a larger union with which OCSEA is affiliated supports and promotes same-sex unions and abortion.

The SERB denied his request for a religious exemption because he was not an adherent of a religion that historically objected to such payments to employee organizations.

The **National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation** said Thursday the federal action came after attorneys for the nonprofit group had notified federal prosecutors about

alleged civil rights violations of state agencies.

The foundation said the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits forcing employees to financially support a union if doing so would violate a sincerely held religious belief.

"The unprecedented involvement by the United States Justice Department in a case of this nature demonstrates the seriousness of the abuse that Ohio employees face when they make conscientious objections to union membership," said **Stefan Gleason, foundation vice president**.

The Department of Administrative Services said in response to the court filing that it was complying with applicable state statutes. "DAS is required by state law and the collective bargaining agreement to withhold dues from the paychecks of our unionized employees," said Ben Piscitelli, department spokesman. "We will continue to do so unless or until the court directs us to do otherwise."