



OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

November 15, 2021

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RE: Ascension's Violation of Temporary Restraining Order

Dear Counsel:

As you are aware, the Honorable Judge William D. LaFortune entered a temporary restraining order on November 12, 2021 restraining and enjoining Ascension from suspending or terminating the employment of, or taking any other adverse action against, any of Ascension's Oklahoma employees and contractors who have requested but have been denied a religious exemption from Ascension's COVID-19 vaccine mandate.

I am appalled to learn from the enclosed news article that Ascension is resuming suspensions in blatant defiance of the court's order. While I understand that Ascension has filed a Motion to Dissolve, the order remains in effect until dissolved or modified pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1450.

It appears that Ascension is determined to trample on the sincerely held religious beliefs of the healthcare heroes it employs despite the court's clear mandate. Ascension's actions will also interrupt patient care and prevent patients from being treated by the provider of their choice. Ascension employees who are suspended in violation of the court's order simply want to be able to continue working with the same accommodations as those who have received medical exemptions.

On behalf of Ascension employees and patients, as well as the citizens of Oklahoma, I am demanding that Ascension do the following: 1) immediately cease and desist its defiance of the court's temporary restraining order and allow the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office time to investigate the allegations of religious discrimination currently pending with the Office of Civil Rights Enforcement; 2) immediately reinstate all suspended or terminated employees who filed for a religious exemption; and 3) immediately put these employees back to work by placing them on their normal work schedule. My office will not tolerate Ascension's defiance of the court order and will fight to ensure that these healthcare heroes can report to work as the court ordered.

Although Ascension has refused to engage in discussions about a resolution of this dispute and appears determined to suspend and fire those who have sought a religious exemption, I remain willing to discuss a resolution. Please confirm that Ascension will comply with these demands pending further resolution by the courts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. O'Connor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

John M. O'Connor
Oklahoma Attorney General

Cc: Jeffrey D. Nowlin, CEO Ascension St. John

Ascension St. John reverses vaccine mandate suspension; employees remain on leave

by Cassidy Mudd & Callie Morris, KTUL Staff
Saturday, November 13th 2021



A photo of Ascension St. John in Tulsa. Provided by Burt Mummolo on Nov. 13, 2021. (KTUL)



TULSA, Okla. (KTUL) — **UPDATE:** A nurse told NewsChannel 8 reporter Burt Mummolo that "...after two and half hours of meetings at the hospital Ascension

leadership is backpedaling on the reprieve and I was just told I cannot come to work on Monday Suspensions back in effect.”

This news comes mere hours after the nurses were told they could come back to work on Monday.

TULSA, Okla. (KTUL) -- Healthcare workers are being suspended across the country for not complying with COVID-19 vaccine mandates.

Ascension St. John in Tulsa was [set to suspend several employees](#) who did not receive religious exemption from the vaccine mandate.

Nurses at Ascension St. John were notified Saturday morning that vaccination suspensions have been placed on hold until further notice.

"I get to go back to my job on Monday," said Ascension St. John nurse Lisa Johnson. "Praise the Lord!"

The news comes after the state's attorney general filed a lawsuit to block Ascension Healthcare from firing employees who were denied religious exemptions from the vaccination mandate.

- **RELATED I** [Oklahoma granted temporary restraining order against Ascension St. John's vaccine mandate](#)

According to court documents, Ascension St. John originally planned to suspend employees who were denied a religious exemption on Nov. 12 and plan to fire them on January 4 unless they get vaccinated.