



## Insight

# Ridiculous Regulations: The Casket Cartel

**MAY 22, 2012**

Can the government restrict economic liberty just to enrich a group of politically favored insiders?

That's the question the monks at Saint Joseph Abbey of St. Benedict, La., have taken to federal court in challenging the constitutionality of Louisiana's requirement that the monks of the Abbey must be licensed as funeral directors and convert their monastery into a licensed funeral home in order to sell their handmade wooden casket.

Under Louisiana law, it is a crime for anyone but a licensed funeral director to sell "funeral merchandise," which includes caskets. To sell caskets legally, the monks would have to abandon their calling for one full year to apprentice at a licensed funeral home, learn unnecessary skills and take a funeral industry test. They would also have to convert their monastery into a "funeral establishment" by, among other things, installing equipment for embalming human remains.

On August 12, 2010 the monks of Saint Joseph Abbey filed a federal constitutional lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana to vindicate their right to earn an honest living. In a time of high unemployment and widespread economic pessimism, this case raises one of today's most important constitutional questions: May the government restrict economic liberty just to enrich a group of politically favored insiders such as licensed funeral directors?

*This post originally appeared on [New Mexico WatchDog](#).*