

Christian group sues Google for refusing to accept ad

LONDON – A Christian group is suing the Internet giant Google after it refused to take advertisements on abortion and religious content.

The U.K.-based Christian Institute, a nondenominational Christian charity, wanted to place an AdWords advertisement so that when an Internet user typed the word abortion into the search engine a link would appear on the right hand side of the page saying: “U.K. abortion law: news and views on abortion from the Christian Institute. www.christian.org.uk.”

The Christian Institute announced April 8 that it has started legal proceedings against Google on the grounds that it is infringing the U.K. Equality Act 2006, which prohibits religious discrimination in the provision of a good, facility or service. The Christian Institute is seeking damages, costs and the permission to publish its advertisement.

Google said it had a policy of declining ads from organizations that mix abortion with religion.

“At this time, Google policy does not permit the advertisement of Web sites that contain abortion and religion-related content,” the Google AdWords team based in Dublin, Ireland, said in its reply to the institute in March.

Google does, however, accept advertisements for abortion clinics and secular pro-abortion sites.

In an April 8 statement, Mike Judge, spokesman for the Christian Institute, said: “Google promotes itself as a company committed to the ideals of free speech and the free exchange of ideas.

“It is against this standard that Google’s anti-religious policy is so unjust,” he said. “For many people, Google is the doorway to the Internet. It is an influential gatekeeper to the marketplace of debate.”

Mr. Judge said that “if there is to be a free exchange of ideas, then Google” can’t give rights to secular groups while “censuring religious views.”

The institute sought to promote its online articles on abortion before the Human Fertilization and Embryology Bill arrives in the House of Commons in May.