

HOW SAME-SEX “MARRIAGE” THREATENS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY & FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Washington State is considering legislation that would redefine marriage in Washington for everyone. Proponents of the same-sex “marriage” bill would have you believe that the passage of same-sex “marriage” legislation will not affect you or your marriage.

To the extent that you see the issue this way, you may be inclined to be sympathetic to the desire to redefine marriage. But the truth is that homosexual “marriage,” “civil unions,” and other special “gay” rights legislation are systematically eroding our First Amendment rights of freedom of religion and conscience.

Unless we understand that sexual freedom comes with a tremendous cost to religious liberty and freedom of conscience, we cannot make an informed decision when it comes to legislation that would redefine marriage.

We need to understand what is happening across our country:

- Just weeks after passing a same-sex “marriage” bill in New York, a part-time county clerk in rural New York State lost her job because she felt that she could not sign a same-sex “marriage” license and found someone else on the premises who would be willing to sign it for her should that situation arise. Not only did she lose her job as a court clerk, but upon hearing of her opposition to legislation redefining marriage, pro-homosexual activists began a protest of her rural cheese farm.
- Shortly after the Massachusetts Supreme Court mandated homosexual “marriage” the state’s largest adoption provider, Catholic Charities of Boston, decided to close down its adoption operations rather than be forced to put children in homosexual households, which would violate Catholic teachings.
- Also in Massachusetts, a parent of a 1st grade student, David Parker, was arrested and charged with “trespassing” at his son’s elementary school during a scheduled meeting with the principal and the town’s Director of Education over his objections to pro-homosexual materials. Parker asked to be notified prior to any presentations of homosexuality resources and prior to any classroom discussions about homosexuality so that he could opt his child out of class during those events. After several months of communication, he was repeatedly told that his requests were “not possible.”
- In Washington D.C., Catholic adoption services had to make the decision to close their adoption ministry rather than place children with homosexual households, which would violate Catholic teachings.
- In New Jersey, shortly after the State Supreme Court mandated “civil unions,” a Methodist church was stripped of its tax-exempt status because it wouldn’t rent facilities for lesbian civil union ceremonies. They are now being sued for discrimination. (*Bernstein v. Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association*)
- In New Mexico, Christian photographers were fined \$6,000+ for discrimination because they declined the opportunity to photograph a lesbian commitment ceremony. (*Willcock v. Elaine Photography*)

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- In California, the state's Supreme Court unanimously ruled against two physicians who declined to perform in-vitro fertilization for lesbian partners, even though the doctors were willing to provide referrals to other facilities. (*Benitez v. North Coast Women's Center*)
- Marcia Walden (a licensed counselor) was asked to counsel a woman in order to help "repair" her homosexual relationship. Because of her Christian faith, Ms. Walden had a "values conflict" and referred the woman to another professional, in accordance with the conduct rules of her profession. The new counselor commended Walden on her recognition of the conflict and her professionalism in making the referral, and called the counseling she received "exemplary." Later that same day, this woman complained to Walden's supervisor, calling her "homophobic," leading to Walden's discharge. (*Walden v. Ctr. for Disease Control and Prevention*)
- In 2009, Eastern Michigan University school officials dismissed a student from the school's counseling program for not affirming homosexual behavior as morally acceptable. The school dismissed Julea Ward, a woman of strong Christian faith, from the program because she would not agree prior to a counseling session to affirm a client's homosexual behavior and would not retract her stance in subsequent disciplinary proceedings. (*Ward v. Eastern Michigan University*)

The important point to remember is that the battle over same-sex "marriage" is not really about marriage at all. That's why it will affect you. Same-sex couples already have all the rights and benefits of marriage through domestic partnerships.

Fundamentally, they are at war with a belief system; a belief system that holds there is a difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships. The goal of the movement is not to achieve equal treatment under the law, but to make sure they will never encounter someone in the course of their daily life who can act on the basis of that belief. That is why some behave so aggressively when they encounter people who have convictions different from their own.

The willingness to use the law to punish people because of the widely held belief is why freedom is at risk for all of us.

If Olympia lawmakers make the choice to redefine marriage, they will create a legal conflict between the definition of marriage and the religious freedom each of us should enjoy.

Count it a blessing if you have not personally experienced a loss of freedom because of this effort. But Winston Churchill once mused, "an appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping he will eat him last."

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