



## Eroding Religious Liberty & Freedom of Conscience

On February 4, 2009 openly gay State Representative Greg Harris (D-Chicago) introduced a bill to legalize same-sex “marriage” in Illinois. On February 18, 2009—recognizing that homosexual “marriage” has very little support in the Illinois General Assembly—Rep. Harris introduced a compromise homosexual “civil unions” bill. This bill was rammed through the General Assembly by razor-thin majorities during the last two days of the 2010 Veto Session (Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> in the House and Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> in the Senate). Fourteen of the seventeen lame duck lawmakers in the Illinois House voted in favor of this bill.

Pro-homosexual activists would have you believe that passage of same-sex “marriage” legislation here in Illinois would not affect you or your 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.

We need to understand what is happening across our country:

- With the passage of Illinois’ civil unions law, ironically called the “Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act”, homosexual activists immediately went after Christian foster care agencies that receive state funds because of their religiously based decisions not to place children in the homes of homosexual partners. As a result, the state of Illinois, in an act of religious discrimination, severed their contracts with Illinois Catholic Charities and the Evangelical Child and Family Agency, forcing them to shut down their important partnership with the state to care for needy children through their adoption/foster care ministry.
- Weeks after IL Governor Patrick Quinn signed the “civil union” bill into law, a homosexual couple sued the owners of two different privately owned bed & breakfasts for refusing to rent out their facilities to hold a “civil union” ceremony and reception. The homosexuals also filed complaints with the IL Attorney General’s office and the IL Department of Human Rights, claiming the owners violated the Human Rights Act. Since January 1, 2006, under the Human Rights Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against any individual based on “sexual orientation”, “gender identity”, age, race, religion, sexual harassment and gender.
- 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.

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- Also in Massachusetts, a parent of a 1<sup>st</sup> 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 homosexual-affirming 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 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 wouldn’t photograph a lesbian commitment ceremony. (*Willock v. Elaine Photography*)
- 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*)

Despite the fact that Illinois’ same-sex marriage bill is titled the “*Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act*,” and the civil unions bill is titled the “*Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act*,” they will negatively affect religious liberties and freedom of conscience. These bills will not protect our individual religious freedoms to object to homosexuality as public policy. In fact, Georgetown University lesbian law professor **Chai Feldblum** has stated publicly that when same-sex marriage is legalized, conservative people of faith will lose religious rights.

By yielding to the homosexual lobby and enacting counterfeit marriage bills and other special “gay” rights legislation, Springfield lawmakers have created official government policies that negatively affect our fundamental rights of religious freedom, speech and parental rights.

Count it a blessing if you don’t yet feel the effects of the gay agenda, but don’t allow that blessing to lull you into inaction. Now is the time to vigorously and courageously oppose every attempt to redefine marriage and the natural family. The essential task of protecting marriage, family and religious freedom is being made incalculably more difficult as the radical homosexual political agenda advances here in Illinois. ■

