

News Release

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CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO PROTECT THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY OF EMPLOYEES AT COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICES ACROSS CALIFORNIA

Riverside County, CA. Today at 5:01pm, county clerks across California will begin to issue licenses to same-sex couples who are rushing to the "altar" now that the Supreme Court has redefined marriage. However, employees of county clerk's offices who have an objection to issuing the same-sex licenses due to their religious beliefs have a constitutional right not to participate in same-sex marriages, and a state-wide campaign has been launched to protect the religious freedom of employees across California.

It has been reported that some county clerks, including the Riverside County Clerk's Office, have stated that all employees within the Clerk's office must participate in same-sex marriages regardless of their religious views on the subject. We have also received similar information from the San Diego County Clerk's Office.

Today, Advocates for Faith and Freedom, together with the Seventh-day Adventist Church State Council, is faxing an advisory letter to California county clerks stating that under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, religious employees have the right to be protected from discrimination in their workplace and are entitled to a reasonable accommodation of their beliefs. This means that employees cannot be forced to participate in same-sex marriages in violation of their religious beliefs. Further, it advises county clerks that although they have the option to perform marriage ceremonies for all couples, they also have the option to perform none at all. A copy of the letter can be viewed at www.faith-freedom.com.

Robert Tyler, General Counsel for Advocates, stated, "Same-sex couples have argued that their personal sexual choices require public acceptance in order for 'equal protection' to exist. It will be tragic if this pursuit of 'equality' actually results in inequality and discrimination against people of faith seeking to adhere to their religious liberty. This would certainly send a message of official state hostility toward religion, in violation of the Establishment Clause, while also violating basic equality, speech, and religious rights of the employees."

Advocates for Faith and Freedom and the Seventh-day Adventist Church State Council have offered to advise and assist employees of clerks' offices whose religious liberties have been violated. Such assistance may include the filing of a federal lawsuit to secure the religious liberty of the employee, if such action becomes necessary.

Advocates for Faith and Freedom is a national non-profit legal organization whose aim is to protect religious liberty in the courts. Advocates is among the legal organizations that represented Proposition 22 Legal Defense and Education Fund in the same-sex marriage litigation before the California Supreme Court. To learn more about our organization, please visit www.faith-freedom.com.