

SOGI: Tools of Intolerance and coercion

Gay political activists are pushing local ordinances in Kentucky to put sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) on par with civil rights status. The cry is for “tolerance” “fairness” and “equality,” but the law ultimately ends up as a tool of discrimination used against those with differing opinions on marriage and human sexuality. Consider that SOGI laws have resulted in fines, imprisonment and mandatory diversity training for those who disagree with the redefinition of marriage and sexual boundaries. Consider:

- Two Idaho pastors faced fines and jail time for refusing to marry a homosexual couple in their wedding chapel—The Hitching Post in 2014. The city attorney said Donald and Evelyn Knapp’s refusal to marry a gay couple was a violation of the city’s **sexual orientation non-discrimination law**.ⁱ
- Robert and Cynthia Gifford, who operate Liberty Ridge Farm in Schaghticoke, NY were fined \$13,000 for refusing to permit a same-sex wedding ceremony on their well-known agri-tourism farm in 2012. The Gifford’s permitted same-sex receptions but had a problem allowing their wedding ceremony on the farm due to their Roman Catholic religious beliefs.ⁱⁱ
- New Mexico photographer Elaine Huegenin was fined \$6,637.94 for refusing to do the photo shoot of a lesbian wedding in 2008. Huegenin refused on the basis that she could not “in good conscience” convey and “celebrate” someone else’s contrary views.ⁱⁱⁱ The New Mexico Supreme Court upheld the fine and found her guilty of violating the state’s nondiscrimination law which **protected sexual orientation**. Justice Richard C. Bosson, rationalized that overruling the Huguenin’s claim to religious freedom was “the price of citizenship.”
- Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cake Shop in Colorado was found guilty of violating the state’s **sexual orientation nondiscrimination law** when he refused to bake a cake for a homosexual wedding. He had no issue with serving homosexuals in general. Instead, he objected on religious grounds to materially participate in the homosexual wedding through his time, creative talents and services. Mr. Phillips chose to stop baking cakes instead of violating his religious beliefs.^{iv}
- A California software developer was forced to pay a \$1 million settlement because he failed to give a job promotion to a man who had come to work dressed as a woman. Interestingly, the employer did not even know the “woman” was a man. California’s **sexual orientation nondiscrimination law** was invoked. As costs related to the legal challenge mounted, the company finally settled out of court. However, to cover their losses the company had to lay off eight employees.^v

Richard Nelson
Executive Director

- American Eagle Outfitters fired a male employee who began dressing like a woman because his appearance was driving away business in its store. New York State’s SOGI law was invoked and American Eagle settled with then New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo and agreed to accommodate transgender workers and revise its policies which banned cross-dressing. They also agreed to initiate transgender diversity training for their employees.^{vi}
- In 2001, AT&T required an employee to sign a new AT&T Broadband Employee Handbook with policies condoning the homosexual lifestyle—policies that conflicted with his religious beliefs. The employee notified his supervisor that the policy was incompatible with his religious beliefs and that he could not sign the certificate of understanding. As a result, he was fired.^{vii}
- Blaine Adamson of Hands On Originals was found guilty of violating Lexington, Kentucky’s **SOGI ordinance** when he declined to fill a T-shirt order for a gay pride event sponsored by the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization (GLSO). Even though Adamson employs homosexuals and offered to help the GLSO find another company to fill the order at the same price, the organizers refused and instead took him before the Lexington Human Rights Commission where they found Adamson guilty and ordered him to undergo diversity training.^{viii}
- In 2009, Julea Ward, a graduate student in counseling, was expelled from Eastern Michigan University (EMU) because she refused to affirm a sexual relationship outside of marriage, which was an affront to her faith. Her religious conviction however, was trumped by EMU’s policy which prohibited **sexual orientation discrimination**. Even though the client was reassigned, EMU told Ward that she would be required to enroll in a “remediation” program whose purpose was to help her “see the error of her ways” and change her “belief system” as it relates to counseling about homosexual relationships.^{ix}
- In 2012, Angela McCaskill, the chief diversity officer at Gallaudet University was suspended after merely signing a petition to put a gay marriage referendum on the ballot in Maryland. Gallaudet prohibits **sexual orientation “discrimination.”**^x
- In 2010, San Jose State University suspended all blood drives on campus because the FDA bans men who have had sex with other men from donating blood. The FDA policy, according to university officials, violates their **sexual orientation discrimination policy.**^{xi}
- Barronelle Stutzman of Arlene’s Flowers in Washington is facing a lawsuit because she refused to do a floral arrangement for a homosexual wedding. Ironically, the homosexual man who placed the order was a friend of hers for ten years. This is hardly a case of hate, but Washington’s attorney general invoked the state’s **sexual orientation nondiscrimination law** and pursued charges nonetheless.^{xii}
- When Melissa and Aaron Klein declined to bake a cake for a same-sex ceremony in 2013, it violated the Oregon Equality Act of 2007, which **prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation**. Oregon’s Bureau of Labor and Industries official Brad Avakian said in pursuing the charges. “The goal is to rehabilitate. For those who do violate the law, we want them to learn from that experience and have a good, successful business in Oregon.”^{xiii}

It is abundantly clear that SOGI laws are used as tools of coercion and discrimination against people who hold religious convictions regarding marriage and human sexuality. This is neither fair, nor tolerant.

ⁱ <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/oct/20/idaho-citys-ordinance-tells-pastors-to-marry-gays/>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Farm-owners-fined-for-declining-to-host-same-sex-5689486.php>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/19/us/weighing-free-speech-in-refusal-to-photograph-ceremony.html?_r=0

^{iv} <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/colorado-baker-to-stop-making-wedding-cakes-after-losing-discrimination-case/>

^v <http://media.citizenlink.com/pdfs/2009-09-ends-harm-business.pdf>

^{vi} <http://www.christianpost.com/news/american-eagle-gives-in-to-cross-dressing-demand-45160/>

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} <http://www.kentucky.com/news/business/article44514183.html>

^{ix} <http://www.adfmedia.org/files/WardFactSheet.pdf>

^x http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/gallaudet-diversity-officer-accuses-university-of-discrimination-in-lawsuit/2013/09/30/2c8268be-2a07-11e3-b139-029811dbb57f_story.html

^{xi} <http://blog.speakupmovement.org/university/freedom-of-association/blood-battle-san-jose-state-university-chooses-sex-over-life-liberty/>

^{xii} <http://blog.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/2014/05/23/4-things-you-need-to-know-about-barronelle-stutzmans-story/>

^{xiii} <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/371329/bake-us-cake-or-else-ryan-t-anderson-leslie-ford>