

CATHOLICS FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY

GOD IS LOVE

Maine Marriage Initiative: What the Bishop Said in Our Parish Bulletins

Religious Conscience Protections (part two)

Religious organizations and individuals (or the small businesses that they own) that conscientiously object to same-sex marriage will be labeled as unlawful —discriminators under state law and thus face a range of penalties at the hands of state agencies and local governments, such as the withdrawal of government benefits or exclusion from government facilities. For example: A religious charity or fraternal organization that opposes same-sex marriage can be denied access to government facilities, such as a lease on government property or participation in a government-sponsored charitable campaign. Doctors, psychologists, social workers, counselors and other professionals who conscientiously object to same-sex marriage can have their licenses revoked. Religious universities or professional schools can have their accreditation revoked for refusing to recognize the validity of same-sex marriages. Church-affiliated organizations can have their tax exempt status stripped because of their conscientious objections to same-sex marriage. Examples of Conflicts in Maine. To take just one specific example of conflict, many universities in Maine, including religious institutions such as Saint Joseph's College, can choose to provide special married student housing to their students. With the enactment of the same-sex marriage law religious universities are forced either to extend married student housing benefits to same-sex couples, thus violating their religious beliefs, or to eliminate the housing benefit altogether. Similarly, a nonprofit social service organization, such as Mercy Hospital, which is sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church, could be forced to provide its employees with same-sex spousal benefits in violation of its religious beliefs. In short, protecting conscience is very much part of the American, and Maine, tradition. We need to make every effort to protect that tradition and overturn this new law.

Catholics for Marriage Equality: What We Know

Religious Conscience Protections for All Maine's Citizens (part two)

- The Maine Human Rights Act prohibits illegal discrimination by businesses, public accommodations, educational institutions, and governmental entities
- The state confers the privilege of a professional license on doctors, counselors and other professionals. Licensing requires professionals to obey State laws – including anti-discrimination laws – in the conduct of their practice.
- Religious Conscience protections do not negate human rights laws. Same-sex marriage does not change existing human rights laws.
- In our pluralistic society, no religion can expect to impose its religious beliefs through the state on others. The Bishop cannot dictate whom the state or other clergy who affirm same-sex marriage can marry.
- Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is illegal in Maine. Presently, none of the above horrid hypotheticals suggested by the Bishop exist. It seems unconscionable that Mercy Hospital would desire to deprive the same-sex partner or children of an employee access to medical benefits available to hetero-sexual parents and children. And, no college in Maine, including St. Joseph's, offers married student housing.
- Let faith, not fear, inform our hearts and minds as we support marriage equality for same-sex couples and their families.

For more information, please go to www.religiouscoalition.org

