

CATHOLICS FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY

GOD IS LOVE

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

Cost to Individual Liberty

Legalizing same-sex marriage can negatively impact our personal liberties, particularly if you own your own business. In New Mexico, a Christian couple who run a photography business were fined more than \$6,000 by the state's Human Rights Commission. Their crime? The photographers refused to accept a commission to take photographs at the "commitment ceremony" of a lesbian couple. The couple in question was able to find another photography service that WAS willing to take the photographs. But they filed the complaint anyway. According to the Alliance Defense Fund, "the commission issued an order finding that Elane Photography engaged in "sexual orientation" discrimination prohibited under state law and ordered it to pay \$6,637.94 in attorneys' fees to the two women who filed the complaint. Sadly, this type of case is likely to become more common if Maine changes the definition of marriage.

Catholics for Marriage Equality: What We Know

Expanding Individual Liberty: **Legalizing same-sex marriage expands the personal liberties of gay and lesbian people while having no effect on heterosexual personal liberties.**

- Marriage is not the issue in the above example. New Mexico does not have same-sex marriage. The non-discrimination laws of the New Mexico Human Rights Act, not marriage laws, require equal treatment by businesses.
- In Maine, like New Mexico, our Human Rights Act requires that businesses agree to serve customers without regard for their race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability status or sexual orientation. This means a Protestant baker cannot refuse a cake for a child's First Communion celebration because of religion nor can a photographer refuse photos for a lesbian's 80th birthday party because of sexual orientation.
- Sexual orientation has been part of the Maine Human Rights Act since 2005. It was ratified *with the support of the Diocese of Portland* by a majority of Maine voters. This existing law, not same-sex marriage, requires equality of service to all people regardless of sexual orientation.
- Jesus' admonition to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," also requires fair and just dealings with everyone with whom we do business, regardless of sexual orientation.
- Catholic social justice teachings have never permitted personal bias to take precedence over the common good.

For more information, please visit our web site at: www.religiouscoalition.org

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Cost to Religious Freedom

Legalizing same-sex marriage can negatively impact religious freedom. Founded in 1869, the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association [in New Jersey] is a ministry organization that provides opportunities for spiritual birth, growth, and renewal in a Christian seaside setting. Affiliated with the United Methodist Church, Ocean Grove is located on the shore within two hours of both New York City and Philadelphia. The grounds are beautiful and couples have used the spot for marriage ceremonies for many decades. In 2007, a same-sex couple filed a complaint with the state attorney general's office on the basis of sexual orientation discrimination after it refused to allow them to use the grounds for a civil union ceremony. A second same-sex couple sued on the same grounds. Making matters even worse, in 2007, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection stripped the Association of its tax-exempt status on part of its property. Even that wasn't enough for some advocates of same-sex marriage. One group threatened to appeal the DEP's decision, saying that it didn't go far enough, according to a report by the Associated Press. "We're looking for a bigger victory here," said Steve Goldstein, the chairman of Garden State Equality. "We have the symbolic victory of the state telling Ocean Grove they're wrong, but there is a bigger victory to be had by having the entire tax-exemption removed. We're happy, but there's a lot more happiness to be had.

Catholics for Marriage Equality: What We Know

Honoring the Religious Freedom of All Maine Citizens

- New Jersey does not have same-sex marriage. The Methodist Conference owned and operated a facility as a money-generating business for public use. In New Jersey as in Maine, illegal discrimination against anyone by a business is prohibited by civil law and subject to civil penalties.
- The United States Constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief to everyone. With limited exceptions, religious practices also are free from state regulation.
- The right not to perform marriages for same-sex couples based on religious belief and practice is absolutely guaranteed to all faith communities in Maine and every other state by the U.S. Constitution through the Fourteenth Amendment.
- Maine's marriage equality law does not compel any faith community to marry or to permit wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples. It specifically states this.
- Maine's *existing* Human Rights Act requires that churches running a public business operate according to the non-discrimination requirements of the Act. This was true before the enactment of same-sex marriage in Maine and is unaffected by its continuation.

Mr. Goldstein's comments are sad. Vindictiveness is never attractive. As Catholic Christians, "we are called to do justice, we are called to love one another, and to walk humbly with God." Our vote to uphold the civil right of same-sex couples to be married by the state will demonstrate the respect that can calm rage and give hope to those who have experienced hurtful discrimination throughout their lives.

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