

4 Reasons Government Should Not Force Farmers to Compromise Faith

When Cynthia's phone rang that September evening in 2012, she was prepared for a usual inquiry about using the farm for a wedding ceremony. Nothing could have prepared her for what ultimately followed: a demand from the state that they violate their faith to host a same-sex ceremony in their own home.

A few weeks ago, we introduced you to Rob and Cynthia Gifford, the couple who was fined \$13,000 for politely declining to host a same-sex marriage ceremony on their property. Thursday, Oct. 2, Alliance Defending Freedom-allied attorney Jim Trainor filed a petition in New York state court asking for review of a New York State Division of Human Rights decision.

The government should not force people to violate their faith, and in this case, force people to choose between their faith and their business, for several reasons:

- **The government shouldn't have the power to force people to do something they believe is wrong in their own home or back yard.**

As ADF-allied attorney Jim Trainor said: "The Constitution prohibits the state from forcing people to promote a message that violates their religious beliefs and conscience. Particularly disturbing is that, in this instance, it's happening in someone's own home."

- **The Giffords didn't discriminate against the couple.**

They made it clear that the women were welcome to any other events on the farm and were willing to host the wedding reception. They turned down the ceremony, which they could not in good conscience host.

- **The commissioner did not consider Robert and Cynthia's constitutional freedoms and religious beliefs.**

During the proceedings, the judge never addressed the Giffords' First Amendment rights of freedom of religion, speech or expression. These are fundamental freedoms for all Americans.

- **Equating racial discrimination with the marriage issue is misleading.**

Mariko Hirose, the attorney for the same-sex couple, was quoted by the Religion News Service as follows: "All New Yorkers are entitled to their own religious beliefs, but businesses cannot discriminate based on sexual orientation any more than they can based on race or national origin." But acting publicly on the basis of religious belief in marriage as it has always existed cannot be compared to race-based segregation, and equating the two is misleading.

The fines include \$10,000 to the state and \$3,000 in "mental anguish" fees to the couple. And as in the case of Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cakeshop, the state requires the Giffords and their staff to be "re-educated."

Take Action

"I fully believe that God blessed this country for freedom to speech and religion. And we have to stand up for that and always fight for that" (Cynthia Gifford, Daily Signal).

Share the Gifford's story—it makes a difference! Too many people today believe that changing the legal definition of marriage won't affect them, and this is simply not true.

Engage in healthy, respectful discussion on social media and in the comments below. Marriage is good for society, and so is respectful debate.

