

A New Kentucky County Clerk's Religious Liberty Is Under Attack

Like Kim Davis before her, Trigg County, Ky., Clerk Carmen Finley is facing backlash as a result of her Christian faith.

This time, the aggressor isn't the militant homosexual lobby, but rather the Madison, Wisconsin, based Freedom From Religion Foundation, a so-called group of "freethinkers" who oppose public proclamations of faith of any kind—but particularly when it involves the non-existent "separation of church and state." Finley's offense: a colorful painting that includes the Ten Commandments and includes the phrase "God spoke these words."

Claiming it a violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, FFRF declared in a press release:

"In McCreary County v. ACLU, the Supreme Court ruled that a modern display of the Ten Commandments in two Kentucky courthouses violated the U.S. Constitution," FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott writes to Trigg County Clerk Carmen Finley. "The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a permanent injunction against such displays in 2010, finding that the counties acted with an impermissible religious purpose."

The Ten Commandments are reportedly not a part of a larger display, and so a reasonable observer would view it as an endorsement of religion by the county, FFRF asserts. By placing this display directly inside its governmental offices, the county is unmistakably sending a message that it gives the display its stamp of approval. The government has no business telling citizens which god they must have, how many gods they must have or that they must have any god

at all. Trigg County needs to get rid of the display at once.

“How can nonbelievers feel welcome in the Trigg County clerk’s office when they have such an obviously biblical message staring them in the face?” asks FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

FFRF also brags that it has had Trigg County on its “radar” for a few months, noting it “took on a local county judge executive for his refusal to marry a nonreligious couple.” The group also targeted another Kentucky county for its display of the Ten Commandments due to objections from “nontheists.”

Finley, who was first elected to office two years ago, said she placed the picture on her office wall about five months ago to brighten up the room, which has been painted a plain beige. She thought it would “go well, since the courthouse is a place of law.”

She has taken the picture down—but should she have to?