

Christian Florist May Lose Home in Battle Over Gay Wedding Arrangements

We were told that same-sex “marriage” was about building homes – not destroying others’. Unfortunately, that’s just another lie from a liberal movement bent on shattering Americans’ freedom, their livelihoods, and now, their property. Like dozens of conservative businesses, the owner of Washington State’s Arlene’s Flowers is finding out exactly how low the Left is willing to sink to demand conformity on marriage.

Barronelle Stutzman, who drew the Left’s ire when she politely declined to make arrangements for a same-sex “wedding,” has been bogged down in a legal fight for almost two years just for exercising her First Amendment rights in the marketplace. Now, that fight may cost Barronelle more than customers. According to Alliance Defending Freedom, it could cost Stutzman her home too. In a sick twist to an already outrageous case, long-time customer Robert Ingersoll and his partner are not only suing Arlene’s Flowers – but Barronelle personally.

And they have the full weight of the Washington Attorney General’s office backing their case. In an unprecedented move, the state’s chief law enforcer, Bob Ferguson, injected himself into the dispute meant to punish Barronelle for refusing to check her faith at her business’s door. A punishment, experts say, that could leave Barronelle homeless. In the meantime, Stutzman’s attorneys at ADF are doing everything they can to stop the state from attacking Barronelle personally – even filing a new court motion.

Under Washington law, AG Ferguson has no grounds to sue Stutzman unless she’s been implicated in a type of fraud – which is even farther-fetched than the original charge. The only frauds in this case are the liberals who insist this debate is just about “love” and “tolerance.” Where’s the

tolerance for the Christians who are simply asking for the same freedom to live out their beliefs as the activists trying to silence them?

“In America, the government is supposed to protect freedom, not use intolerance for certain viewpoints to intimidate citizens into acting contrary to their faith,” said ADF’s Dale Schowengerdt. “The attorney general has acted inappropriately by trying to intimidate Barronelle through his lawsuit rather than leaving the process where the law says such matters need to take place. Plenty of other florists are willing to provide flowers for same-sex ceremonies, yet both lawsuits against Barronelle insist on going after not only her business, but going after her personally as well. That’s extraordinary, and we’re asking the court to put a stop to it.”

For now, Washington’s Ferguson could take a lesson or two from his Mississippi counterpart. There, state Attorney General Jim Hood is standing up for citizens like Barronelle, who voted to uphold the natural definition of marriage in their state Constitution. In papers filed Monday, Hood – together with Governor Phil Bryant (R) – asked the courts to leave their 10-year-old marriage amendment alone. “Mississippi’s traditional marriage laws do not discriminate,” the leaders wrote in an appeal to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

In Kansas, locals got some much-needed relief on marriage from an unlikely source: U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. The Obama appointee put the state’s same-sex “weddings” on ice in an emergency injunction that puts a radical court ruling on hold – at least for now. Sotomayor’s order is one in a long line of the justices’ stays on the issue – which, thanks to a positive Sixth Circuit Court ruling last week, is almost certainly post-marked for the high court. **Tony Perkins** is president of Family Research Council.