

Fight Against an 'Illegal' LGBT Law in Florida City Heats Up

Liberty Counsel filed a brief in the appeal of Jacksonville, Florida residents and businesses against the city's 2017 ordinance that added "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as "protected categories" under Jacksonville law.

The lawsuit, *Parsons v. City of Jacksonville*, seeks to invalidate the so-called "Human Rights Ordinance" or "HRO" because its authors and sponsors illegally hid the effects of the ordinance through intentionally deceptive drafting and messaging.

In the first round of the litigation, the trial court dismissed Liberty Counsel's case against the HRO, on the theory that the plaintiffs lack legal standing to file the lawsuit because they are not injured *yet* or injured *enough* by the city's illegal act. In this new round, Liberty Counsel has appealed the dismissal, and shows in its brief to the First District Court of Appeal that any resident of Jacksonville is already injured by the city's deception and can challenge the validity of the HRO *now* under applicable statutes and well-settled precedent. Importantly, none of the city's filings to date have made any attempt to defend the validity of the HRO under Florida law.

Prior versions of the HRO were defeated twice in Jacksonville with help from Liberty Counsel and others. The 2017 HRO sponsors on the City Council let radical LGBT activists choose the language for the "new" HRO, and then worked together to sell the deceptive and illegal language to the public and other council members. Their false message was that the "new" HRO was somehow different in effect from the previously

defeated versions.

“The city passed the ordinance illegally and is now trying to cover up the deception of the authors and sponsors with slick procedural hurdles,” said Liberty Counsel’s assistant vice president of legal affairs, Roger Gannam, who was a long-time Jacksonville resident before joining Liberty Counsel. “The fair and honest people of Jacksonville deserve better from their city officials.

“No Jacksonville citizen or business should be forced to celebrate the same-sex relationships of others under threat of fines or loss of their businesses, and Jacksonville’s women and girls should feel safe from predatory men in their own restrooms and facilities. The appellate court should correct the trial court’s error and give our Jacksonville clients their day in court.” {eo}

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