

Florist Won't Back-Petal on Marriage

In Eastern Washington, religious hostility is in full bloom. Just ask Barronelle Stutzman, owner of Arlene's Flowers.

After a longtime business relationship with an openly gay customer, Stutzman now finds herself in Benton County Superior Court fighting for her rights. When her client, Robert Ingersoll, stopped by Arlene's Flowers in March to make arrangements for his upcoming wedding, Barronelle kindly told him that she couldn't help. As a Christian, she explained, she objected to same-sex "marriage" on moral grounds. Robert said he respected her opinion, the two hugged, and parted ways.

To Stutzman's surprise, they were reunited by an interesting source: the Washington State Attorney General, who is now suing the shop for sexual discrimination. "Nonsense," says her attorney, JD Bristol. "Arlene's Flowers has catered to all patrons, including homosexuals, for many years." In fact, he points out, "Arlene's Flowers has had openly gay employees." "This is about gay marriage," Bristol argued, "it's not about a person being gay. She has a conscientious objection to homosexual 'marriage,' not homosexuality. It violates her conscience."

Unlike other lawsuits, Barronelle's case is unique in that she has a history of serving Ingersoll on several other occasions. She only drew the line here because it would require her participation in a ceremony that violates her faith. If she refuses, however, the state is threatening a \$2,000 fine.

Of course, leading up to last November's election, when Washington State voted to legalize same-sex "marriage," supporters argued that redefining marriage wouldn't hurt anyone—that it was just about two people who love each other.

Well, it may be about two people who love each other, but it's also about the florists, the bakers, the candlestick makers, and everyone else the Left wants to force to endorse their relationship!

In an alert to supporters, our good friend Joseph Backholm with the Family Policy Institute of Washington says he tried to warn the state about the consequences of redefining marriage on education, parental rights, small business, and religious liberty. "Now that the law says marriage is genderless," he writes, "those who think otherwise [have a choice]: conform or be punished... Now liberals believe they are legally entitled to someone else's labor."