

Gay Lobby Puts Slander Bullseye on Texas Attorney General

Ken Paxton has been the Attorney General of Texas for a little over 13 months, but it's hard to argue that it's been perhaps the most tumultuous 13 months of his life.

"It takes a lot of courage for believers to step into this political process," he said during a speech shortly after taking office. "We are in the position as the church, and as believers, we have to stand up and speak out."

As a retired member of the Texas House of Representatives, he ran successfully to replace now-Gov. Greg Abbott as Attorney General, promising to defend Texans' freedom and liberty. Six months later, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which stated marriage licenses must be issued to same-sex couples.

Paxton issued his own opinion to Texas county clerks, encouraging them hold true to their religious convictions, and pledging to do anything he can to protect their religious liberties. He said the Supreme Court had "ignored the text and spirit of the Constitution to manufacture a right that simply does not exist."

"In so doing, the Court weakened itself and weakened the rule of law, but did nothing to weaken our resolve to protect religious liberty and return to democratic self-government in the face of judicial activists attempting to tell us how to live," he wrote. "Indeed, for those who respect the rule of law, this lawless ruling presents a fundamental dilemma: A ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court is considered the law of the land, but a judge-made edict that is not based in the law or the Constitution diminishes faith in our system of government

and the rule of law.”

He said any clerk who chose not to issue licenses due to religious reservations would likely face litigation or fines. He encouraged them to seek out attorneys who will defend their religious freedoms.

“[N]umerous lawyers stand ready to assist clerks defending their religious beliefs, in many cases on a pro-bono basis, and I will do everything I can from this office to be a public voice for those standing in defense of their rights,” he said. “Texas must speak with one voice against this lawlessness, and act on multiple levels to further protect religious liberties for all Texans, but most immediately do anything we can to help our County Clerks and public officials who now are forced with defending their religious beliefs against the Court’s ruling.”

He had previously issued a full legal opinion to the Texas Lt. Governor’s Office, which had requested guidance on the issue.

A few weeks later, he was indicted on securities fraud and other charges, which could lead up to 99 years in prison, the loss of his law license, and the end of his political career. The charges, brought by political opponents, are a clear case of “double jeopardy,” as they relate to a matter he already addressed in 2012.

Paxton admitted he reached out to acquaintances on behalf of a friend without registering as a securities representative—not realizing he needed to do so—which at the time was viewed as a relatively minor infraction. He paid a \$1,000 fine.

But as that case continues, despite many legal experts suggesting it may not “go anywhere,” the gay lobby has taken another course of action to see to it Paxton is removed from office. A group of hundreds of liberal Democrat attorneys and judges have filed an ethics complaint with the Texas Bar Association, demanding that his law license be revoked.

The complaint states, in part: "Attorney General Paxton exceeded the scope of the constitutional and statutory authority of the Office of the Attorney General. Attorney General Paxton also failed to cite in his Opinion either the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution or controlling U.S. Supreme Court decisions. Ignoring decades-old federal law to the contrary, Attorney General Paxton's Opinion purports to empower Texas state officials to assert individual religious grounds for refusing to perform their official duties. In addition, Attorney General Paxton released public statements in connection with the Opinion that disparaged the U.S. Supreme Court and encouraged state officials to violate their official oaths of office."

That, too, would end his political career. The office of Texas Attorney General is often a stepping stone to higher office, as was the case for Abbott, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and former Gov. Mark White.

The Texas Bar's chief disciplinary counsel initially dismissed a complaint filed against Paxton. But the liberal attorneys appealed the decision and were able to force a full investigation.

"Attorney General Paxton has a right to disagree with a ruling of the Supreme Court," Houston attorney Eddie Rodriguez, who led the call for the probe, said. "Lawyers do that every single day. What makes a difference is that you cannot encourage people to violate that ruling and that law."

Perhaps foreshadowing the opposition he would face, Paxton told a group gathered at the Pflugerville, Texas, First Baptist Church, "It's important to understand opponents of religious liberty aren't going away anytime soon. We must refuse to be marginalized in the name of political correctness. ... Our faith informs the decisions that we make and we must live our lives in a fashion that is true to our values. It's not just a right, it's an obligation to stand up

for what we believe in.”