

Here's What Kim Davis Says She'll Do in Office Today

The county clerk from Kentucky who was jailed after refusing to issue marriage licenses to gay couples said Monday she will not authorize the licenses now that she has returned to work, but she will not block her deputies from issuing them.

Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis, 49, who has said her beliefs as an Apostolic Christian prevent her from issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, has been under the threat of returning to jail if she interfered in the issuance of licenses.

Davis said she doubted the validity of the licenses that are set to be issued, which she said would state that they are being issued under U.S. District Judge David Bunning's order.

Davis, who returned to work on Monday, told a news conference any marriage licenses issued would not carry her name, title or her personal authorization. She added she would take no action against deputy clerks who issue licenses, although she does not believe they have the authority to do so.

"I'm here before you this morning with a seemingly impossible choice that I do not wish on any of my fellow Americans: my conscience or my freedom," Davis said.

A pack of reporters crowded into the clerk's office on Monday morning, where there were no applicants for marriage licenses. Davis' supporters rallied outside, saying gay marriage is a sin.

The issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex couples in Kentucky and other states has become the latest focal point in the long-running debate over gay marriage, which became legal nationwide following a U.S. Supreme Court decision in June.

Her supporters see her as being persecuted for her religious beliefs while her opponents say she is abdicating her duties as a public servant by trying to ban gay marriage which is now the law of the land.

Shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court ruling, Davis announced an office policy that no marriage licenses would be issued. Gay couples who were denied licenses challenged her policy.

U.S. District Judge David Bunning ordered Davis jailed for contempt on Sept. 3 for refusing to comply with his order to issue licenses in line with the Supreme Court ruling. He ordered her released five days later when the licenses were being issued by deputy clerks.

In his release order, Bunning warned Davis there would be consequences if she interfered with the issuance of marriage licenses, directly or indirectly, when she returned to work.

Davis left the jail last Tuesday to a roaring crowd of supporters, who launched rallies after her release demanding the firing of deputy clerks who provide marriage licenses without her permission.

On Friday, Davis asked the Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals to allow her to continue banning marriage licenses for her entire office until a lawsuit against her is decided. Her attorneys argued that Bunning's initial order had only covered couples who were suing her.

Liberty Counsel spokeswoman Charla Bansley said on Monday they would continue to pursue appeals for Davis.

Davis has asked Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear, a Democrat, state lawmakers and Bunning to accommodate her beliefs.

"I don't want to have this conflict. I don't want to be in the spotlight, and I certainly don't want to be a whipping post," said Davis, also a Democrat.

The Rowan County Rights Coalition has no objection to licenses being issued as Davis described, spokeswoman Mary Hargis said. Davis violated the civil rights of same-sex couples when she chose not to issue marriage licenses, she added.

“She has an excuse as a religious conviction, but when did religious conviction and religious freedom become a shield for bigotry?” Hargis said.

(Additional reporting by Peter Cooney; Writing by David Bailey and Fiona Ortiz; Editing by Susan Heavey and Lisa Lambert)

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