

Christian Bakers Face \$135,000 Fine for Refusing to Bake Cake for Gay Wedding

The owners of an Oregon bakery learned Friday that there is a severe price to pay for following their Christian faith.

A judge for the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) recommended a lesbian couple should receive \$135,000 in damages for their emotional suffering after Sweet Cakes by Melissa refused to make them a wedding cake.

As a result—Aaron and Melissa Klein could lose everything they own—including their home.

The Oregonian reports the recommended penalty is not final and could be raised or lowered by State Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian.

The controversy started in 2013 when Aaron Klein declined to provide a cake for a lesbian wedding. Later that year, the women filed a complaint against Klein and his wife, Melissa.

“The facts of this case clearly demonstrate that the Kleins unlawfully discriminated against the Complainants,” read a statement by the BOLI to the Oregonian. “Under Oregon law, businesses cannot discriminate or refuse service based on sexual orientation, just as they cannot turn customers away because of race, sex, disability, age or religion. Our agency is committed to fair and thorough enforcement of Oregon civil rights laws, including the Equality Act of 2007.”

Within hours of the ruling, the Family Research Council facilitated the establishment of a GoFundMe account to help the Kleins raise the money they need. In less than eight hours, more than \$100,000 was raised.

However, late Friday GoFundMe pulled the plug—sending this message to would-be donors:

“After careful review by our team, we have found the ‘Support Sweet Cakes By Melissa’ campaign to be in violation of our Terms and Conditions,” the message read. “The money raised thus far will still be made available for withdrawal.”

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins blasted the harsh penalty levied against the Kleins.

“The state of Oregon has given a new meaning to shotgun weddings,” Perkins said. “You will be forced to participate in same-sex weddings and violate your beliefs.”

Perkins wondered what impact the Oregon ruling would have on religious freedom across the country.

“If Americans are not free to decline to be involved in a specific activity that violates their beliefs, then we are not free,” he said.

It’s not exactly clear what led GoFundMe to drop the fundraising drive—but Perkins blamed it on gay activists.

“This reveals two very important aspects of the redefinition of marriage, Americans are not going along with it and two—the intolerance of those trying to redefine marriage is historically unprecedented,” Perkins said.

Samaritan’s Purse a Christian ministry run by Franklin Graham, has stepped up and offered to raise funds for the embattled Christian couple. The website can be found [here](#).

Aaron Klein told me they will appeal the judge’s recommended fine.

“All Americans should be free to live and work by their faith without the fear of the government punishing them,” he told me.

Klein told me the gay rights activists won't be satisfied until her family is living in a homeless shelter.

"This is not coming out of our business assets—the business has already been shuttered," he said. "This is coming out of personal property. They want to take our house. They want to put us out on the street."

Melissa told me the state of Oregon is trying to send a message to Christian business owners.

"They are trying to say—look what will happen to you if you decide to live by your faith," she said. "They won't be satisfied until we lose everything."

The Kleins said they were incredibly moved by the generosity of their supporters.

And while they were disappointed that GoFundMe removed the campaign—they are not upset.

"If GoFundMe does not believe in our cause or what we are doing—that's their right," Aaron told me. "And that's what we are fighting for. We should have that right too. If it goes against our faith or beliefs we should be able to say we won't do that."

The Kleins also had kind words for Franklin Graham. They talked by telephone on Friday.

"A while ago Franklin told me that if I needed anything to give him a call," Aaron said. "So I called him after the verdict. He said to not get discouraged—that God is good."

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