

Christian Filmmakers Win Case: State Can't Require Them to Make Gay Wedding Videos

Over two years ago, Alliance Defending Freedom filed a lawsuit on behalf of two Minnesota filmmakers, Carl and Angel Larsen.

As parents of eight children, they never anticipated that this would be something they would need to do.

But when Carl and Angel realized a state law was threatening their right to live and work according to their beliefs, they decided to take a stand—for themselves, for their eight kids and for all Americans.

Today, their stand was rewarded.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit ruled in favor of the Larsens. It reinstated their case (which was dismissed by the lower court) and ruled that the State can't force the Larsens to express messages through their films that violate their religious convictions.

This is great news! The court has breathed new life into the Larsens' case.

Why the Larsens Chose to File This Lawsuit

To understand why the Larsens chose to file this lawsuit, you first have to understand Carl and Angel.

1. They love everyone. The Larsens love and serve everyone. They just cannot, like many filmmakers, create films with messages that violate their deepest beliefs.
2. They love Jesus. The Larsens are Christians who strive

- to live and work consistently with their beliefs, sharing the love of the gospel with those around them.
3. They love marriage. Carl and Angel are passionate about helping couples around them build strong marriages. They often counsel engaged and married couples, and Carl has even officiated two weddings.
 4. They love telling great stories. As filmmakers, Carl and Angel want to tell powerful stories that glorify and magnify God. That's why they named their filmmaking business Telescope Media Group.

With these four things in mind and a goal to change hearts in our culture, the Larsens decided they wanted to start using their talents as filmmakers to tell stories about the goodness of marriage between a man and a woman. For the Larsens, the key elements of these marriage stories—how the couple met, the way their relationship deepened, what it means to the couple to be entering into a covenant with God—reflect Christ's relationship with His church.

But the Larsens soon discovered that Minnesota officials interpreted a state law to mean that if they tell stories celebrating marriage between a man and a woman, they must also tell stories celebrating different conceptions of marriage. If they decline, the Larsens would face substantial fines and even jail time.

This displays a complete misunderstanding of the Constitution. The government should never have the power to force anyone to celebrate events or express messages against their deeply held beliefs.

But it also displays a complete misunderstanding of the Larsens.

The Larsens Love and Serve All People

The Larsens' lives are defined by a commitment to diversity—a commitment born out of their faith. In their home, Carl and

Angel welcome people from all backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. If you were to look under their 12-foot dining room table, you'd see the names of over 1,000 guests who have shared a meal and a conversation with the Larsens and their eight kids.

And in their business, the Larsens serve everyone. That includes LGBT people. As with all their clients, the Larsens benefit from their creativity, their friendship and their business. But like many other filmmakers, Carl and Angel cannot express every message through their films.

That's why their court victory is so important.

If the government can force the Larsens to express messages that violate their beliefs, what's to stop it from forcing you to violate your beliefs? On the other hand, if the Larsens are free to live and work according to their beliefs, that guarantees your freedom to do the same.

Our communities flourish when they look a lot like the Larsens' dinner table—a place where everyone can discuss their differences, treat each other with respect, agree to disagree and have the freedom to follow their own consciences in deciding important issues like the meaning of marriage.

Quite simply, a win for the Larsens is a win for us all. {eo}

This article originally appeared at Alliance Defending Freedom.