

Fired for Same-Sex Marriage Stance, Craig James Takes Legal Action Against Fox

Former ESPN and CBS broadcaster Craig James has criticized Fox Sports Southwest (FSSW) for firing him because of his public stance on same-sex marriage, and he has gotten lawyers involved.

Fox Sports Southwest announced on Aug. 30 that James would join its *Fox College Saturday* college football analysis team. The former Southern Methodist University and NFL player was to be teamed with Erin Hartigan and former NFL quarterback Tony Banks on Saturday postgame shows, in addition to appearing in some segments of Fox Sports Southwest's Big 12 live wrap-up.

Though his first day on the job—Aug. 31—went well, FSSW General Manager Jon Heidtke called James on Sept. 1 to inform him he had been fired. According to Breitbart, Heidtke—who also hired James—said a higher-up in the network had been made aware of his comments about same-sex marriage during James' unsuccessful 2012 run for the Senate.

"I was shocked that my personal religious beliefs were not only the reason for Fox Sports firing me but I was completely floored when I read stories quoting Fox Sports representatives essentially saying that people of faith are banned from working at Fox Sports," James told Breitbart News. "That is not right and surely someone made a terrible mistake.

"I have worked in broadcasting for 24 years and have always treated my colleagues with respect and dignity regardless of their background or personal beliefs," James continued. "I believe it is essential in our business to maintain professional relationships with people from a diverse background and have tolerance for those of different

beliefs. I have never discussed my faith while broadcasting and it has never been an issue until now.”

James was asked about same-sex marriage in an April 2012 primary debate. He replied, “People choose to be gay. ... I think it’s a choice. I do. Same-sex marriage, if someone chooses to do that, that’s done. And God’s going to judge each one of us in this room for our actions. And in that case right there, they’re going to have to answer to the Lord for their actions.”

James also opposes abortion. His positions on both issues adhere to the Texas Republican Party platform.

“At Fox Sports we respect all points of view, and despite reports to the contrary, the decision to no longer use Craig James in our college football coverage was simply because he was not a good fit for Fox Sports,” reads a statement regarding James’ dismissal.

“Mr. James, while both experienced and knowledgeable, is a polarizing figure in the college sports community,” the statement continues. “Regrettably, the decision to use him was not properly vetted, and as a result he will no longer provide commentary on Fox Sports Southwest’s college football coverage.”

Liberty Institute sent a letter to Fox Sports officials Tuesday on James’ behalf, demanding his immediate reinstatement.

“The decision to terminate Craig James because of Mr. James’s religious beliefs is a severe violation of Mr. James’s religious liberty ... and an affront to all Americans who cherish that bedrock principle of American freedom,” the letter says.

It continues, “If you refuse to reinstate Mr. James, millions of Americans will be left with the impression that you do not

respect religious liberty and Liberty Institute will be forced to pursue subsequent legal options.”