

Houston Pastors Battle Lesbian Mayor's 'Unequal' Gay Rights Ordinance

The coalition of pastors and citizens who submitted more than 55,000 signatures on a referendum petition to repeal Houston Mayor Annise Parker's "Equal Rights Ordinance" that grants special privileges to sexual behavior and gender confusion have taken their case to the highest court in Texas.

The No UNEqual Rights Coalition filed a mandamus appeal to the Texas Supreme Court today challenging the refusal by a panel (Justices Martha Hill Jamison, William Boyce and Tracy Christopher) of the Fourteenth Court of Appeals to grant a ruling that would require the city of Houston to follow the City Charter based on City Secretary Anna Russell's report.

Russell confirmed in writing on Aug. 1 that the petition sponsors had submitted 17,846 qualified signatures, the minimum being 17,269. Russell only reviewed 19,177 signatures, for a 93 percent validation rate. Civil Court judges John Coselli, Jeff Shadwick and Robert Schaeffer had refused to rule on the basic facts asserted by petition sponsors that they had met the minimum number required. The latter two granted temporary injunctions suspending the ordinance pending a trial now slated for January.

"We committed from day one that we would not yield, bow, bend or falter in fighting for the safety of our women and children, our basic constitutional freedoms and the fundamental right to vote," said the Rev. Dave Welch of the Houston Area Pastor Council on behalf of the coalition.

"Neither city officials who conspire to deprive citizens of our voting rights nor judges who can't seem to make a decision based on clear facts will deter our commitment to seek truth

and justice. The evidence we have presented to the courts is irrefutable, which is why our mayor and the highest paid city attorney in America have hired at least three major outside law firms and marched 15 of their attorneys into the courtroom to our one.”

Welch said that the coalition decided to appeal to the Texas Supreme Court and request the court issue an order that would confirm the suspension of the ordinance pending the ballot vote and require the City Council to either repeal the ordinance or place it on the ballot as required by the City Charter.

“Our attorneys are convinced that the city will attempt continued delays of the trial even beyond January. Their hired guns even arrogantly accused our pastors and citizen leaders of engaging in fraud. The brazen attempted theft of our voting rights by the Parker/Feldman regime is an appalling abuse of government power against its own citizens—an abuse we trust will be corrected by our state Supreme Court justices,” he concluded.