

Illinois Same-Sex Marriage Bill Breeds Hostility Toward Religion

Attorneys with the Thomas More Society issued a letter on Wednesday to members of the Illinois House of Representatives warning that the state's pending same-sex marriage bill (SB 10) provides a disaster for religious liberty, no matter which side of the same-sex marriage debate one supports.

The letter states, "Law professors on both sides of the marriage issue agree that Senate Bill 10 provides the worst religious liberty protections of any **same-sex marriage** bill in the country."

The letter highlights that other states that have legalized same-sex marriage, such as Connecticut, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont and Washington, have recognized the importance of protecting **religious liberty** and have added specific language in their respective same-sex marriage bills to protect "services, accommodations, advantages, facilities, goods or privileges ... related to the solemnization of a marriage."

The letter warns that, should the current same-sex marriage bill be voted into law, Illinois' religious hospitals, religious schools, religious organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, and businesses owned by people of faith would face an onslaught of court battles: "SB 10 will force religious people and organizations into years of legal fights, likely against the Illinois government, to defend their rights to practice their faith."

"SB 10 would make Illinois the most hostile state in the country to the **religious freedoms** of people of faith," says Peter Breen, vice president and senior counsel of the Thomas

More Society, a national public-interest law firm. "SB 10 would generate years of litigation and cause those who faithfully practice their religion to be mislabeled as 'discriminators,' stripped of government benefits, and subjected to fines and penalties simply because they abide by their sincerely held beliefs. Legal scholars have urged on a bipartisan basis that SB 10 in its current form be rejected. Illinois legislators should heed this bipartisan call."

The letter cites numerous examples of businesses and organizations that are being sued around the country for actions taken in compliance with their religious beliefs. The letter concludes by stating, "Instead of being a 'Religious Freedom' bill, SB 10 will devastate the liberties of individuals, businesses, religious organizations and religious charities all across our state of Illinois."