

Judge Rejects Houston Mayor's Chokehold on Pastors

A Texas judge put the kibosh on the City of Houston's move to deny a jury trial to pastors battling the bathroom bill that would allow transgenders to the restrooms of their choice: male or female.

The City of Houston had filed several motions and asked a Texas district court to deny pastors a jury hearing. That would have meant a final decision on the bathroom bill would be in the hands of a single judge in what they tried to classify as an election dispute.

Judge Robert Schaffer issued the ruling late Tuesday in the Harris County District Court in Houston. This ruling is connected to the same case that made national headlines when Houston's lesbian mayor, Annise Parker, subpoenaed copies of pastor's sermons.

As I reported in my Watchman on the Wall column called "Houston, We Still Have a Problem: Lesbian Mayor Is at It Again," last week the pastors followed all the requirements and paid all the costs to hold a jury trial. Thankfully, the judge upheld the law rather than denying the rights of the pastors.

"As a citizen of Houston for over 30 years and a community leader, I feel our city has suffered enough national embarrassment over this issue when what we have asked for all along is to simply let the people decide," Pastor Steve Riggle, who was one of the ministers subpoenaed, said in a statement to city council members before the judge's ruling.

"What will happen when our city and the nation finds out that now the mayor will not allow this trial on her actions to subvert the right of the people to vote to be decided by a

jury? There comes a time when all of you who serve on this elected council need to stand up and let your voice be heard that you will no longer allow this mayor to subvert the right of the people in pursuing her personal agenda. That time is now!"