

Judge Rules Christian Baker Discriminated Against Gay Couple

A Colorado bakery owner illegally discriminated against a gay couple when he refused to bake a wedding cake for the pair last year because of his Christian religious beliefs, a judge ruled on Friday.

Administrative Law Judge Robert Spencer ordered Jack Phillips, owner of Masterpiece Cakeshop in suburban Denver, to accommodate sex-couples or face fines and other possible penalties.

“At first blush, it may seem reasonable that a private business should be able to refuse service to anyone it chooses,” Spencer wrote in his 13-page ruling.

“This view, however, fails to take into account the cost to society and the hurt caused to persons who are denied service simply because of who they are.”

The case involves Charlie Craig and David Mullins, who said Phillips refused to bake a wedding for their wedding celebration when they went to his shop in 2012. The couple was wed in Massachusetts, one of 16 U.S. states that have legalized same-sex marriage, but wanted to have a celebration of their nuptials in Colorado.

Colorado allows civil unions for same-sex couples, but defines marriage as between one man and one woman. Phillips refused to bake the cake, saying his Christian beliefs prevented him from doing so.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Division, which ruled that Phillips had

violated a state law barring discrimination at public accommodations based on race, gender or sexual orientation. On Friday, Spencer upheld the commission's findings.

Mullins said in a statement it was "offensive and dehumanizing" when he and Craig were denied service at the bakery. "No one should fear being turned away from a public business because of who they are," he said.

Phillips has not decided whether to appeal to a higher court, said his attorney, Nicolle Martin.

"If the government can take away your First Amendment rights, there's nothing they can't take away from you," she said.

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