

Key West Judge Strikes Down Gay Marriage Ban

A Florida judge on Thursday struck down the state's **gay marriage** ban, the latest in a string of court rulings across the United States voiding state laws that restrict the right to marry.

Circuit Judge Luis Garcia, whose jurisdiction includes the Florida Keys, ordered the Monroe County Clerk of Court to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples next Tuesday.

Garcia ruled in favor of a same-sex couple seeking to marry, saying Florida's gay marriage ban violated their rights to equal protection under the U.S. Constitution.

He acknowledged that the majority of Florida voters opposed same-sex marriage and had voted in favor of the state's 2008 constitutional amendment.

"But it is our country's proud history to protect the rights of the individual, the rights of the unpopular and the rights of the powerless, even at the cost of offending the majority," Garcia wrote.

He compared the right of same-sex couples to marry to the National Rifle Association's protection of the right to bear arms and the push by Nazi supremacists to march in a Jewish neighborhood, as well as interracial marriage and school integration.

"The Constitution guarantees and protects *all* of its citizens from government interference with those rights," Garcia said.

Reporting by Letitia Stein; Editing by David Adams, Susan

Heavey and Bill Trott

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