

Legal Battle Over Gay Marriage in Florida Heats Up

In the last 24 hours, Liberty Counsel has defended marriage in Florida by filing an amicus response in the *Brenner v. Scott* case in Tallahassee and by filing separate lawsuits against the Clerk of Court in Osceola County, and against the Mayor of Orlando and a Circuit Judge in Orange County. Liberty Counsel represents Florida Family Action Inc. in all three cases.

In the Brenner case, a federal judge in August ordered the Washington County Clerk of Court to issue a marriage license to a same-sex couple who are plaintiffs in the case, ruling with a stroke of a pen that Florida's Marriage Protection Amendment, passed in 2008 by nearly 5 million Floridians, was "unconstitutional."

The stay of that ruling is set to expire at the end of the day on Jan. 5, 2015, causing many activists throughout Florida to demand marriage licenses from other Florida clerks of court for Jan. 6 "weddings." In its court filing yesterday, Liberty Counsel advised the federal court that its August preliminary injunction does not require any Florida clerk to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples outside of Washington County, and that the court lacks jurisdiction over any other clerk.

"In sum, the Court may not expand the Preliminary Injunction as an afterthought, to afford relief that no one requested, benefiting persons who are not plaintiffs, at the expense of clerks who are not defendants," said Horatio Mihet, vice president of Legal Affairs and Chief Litigation Counsel for Liberty Counsel, in the filing.

The new lawsuits against the Osceola County Clerk of Court,

Armando Ramirez, Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer and Circuit Judge Robert LeBlanc were filed in response to the officials' dereliction of their official public duties. Osceola Clerk Ramirez is actively soliciting same-sex couples to apply for marriage licenses to be issued "one minute after midnight" in Kissimmee on Jan. 6, in blatant violation of his sworn oath to uphold Florida's marriage laws.

In Orlando, Mayor Dyer and Judge LeBlanc have both agreed to officiate and promote public mass wedding ceremonies on Jan. 6, despite having no legal authority to solemnize the marriages of same-sex couples.