

Legal Stands Against Same-Sex Marriage Could Spark Revival

Since the Supreme Court struck down gay-marriage bans, same-sex couples across the country threatened and enacted lawsuits, attempting to bully Christians into kowtowing to immoral marriages.

But in Florida, Rep. Scott Plakon, R-Longwood, created a bill to protect clergy members from performing ceremonies that violate religious beliefs.

"Theoretically, religious beliefs should be protected," Plakon says. "But we think it's a good idea to further clarify Florida statutory law. The more clarity, the better."

Plakon looks to Justice Anthony Kennedy's response to *Obergefelle v. Hodges* as the basis for his bill.

"Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned," Kennedy writes.

If passed, Plakon's House Bill 43 would prohibit legal action against pastors or churches who refused to perform same-sex wedding ceremonies.

At a committee meeting this week, "Everyone there, including LGBT groups, agreed pastors should be able to not perform ceremonies like that, but they disagree should be put in law" Plakon says.

The bill made it out of the civil justice subcommittee and onto the judiciary committee with a 9-4 vote along party lines. Plakon hopes to have the bill hit the House and Senate floors come January or February. The bill would take effect July 1,

2016.

For pastors like Doug Bankson, the bill goes beyond legalities, and could spark a revival.

"I believe the sleeping giant of the church is re-awakening to the importance of having a political voice and presence, and they are crying out for leadership," Bankson says. "A deeper study of the importance of the clergy in the founding of our nation finds that the fires of both revival and independence were fanned and forged through the pastors and pulpits of America."

But to allow for revival, politicians may need to make legal protection for Christians, despite objections.

Plakon says the bill is short and straight-forward. Without the legal protection, however, churches or pastors would be forced to develop a constitutional argument, which could be massively expensive.

Rather than subjecting churches to massive legal fines from fighting litigation in a constitutional case, the bill would provide an extra shield protection.

"My hope is this law is never used," Plakon says. "(But the) trajectory of public policy, how quickly culture and public policy are moving, we want to explicitly state (religious protections) in Florida law."

And for Bankson, moving the bill forward is a spiritual victory that allows pastors to take a stand.

"Others are concerned not to rock the boat for fear of offending members who may hold differing political views," Bankson says. "While I understand God is neither Democrat nor Republican, and both parties need their chastening, we are compelled to both speak the truth in love and warn the unruly! We cannot shy away for political purposes or we have become

man-pleasers and are in the danger of Eli, who lost his place because he warned his sons but didn't restrain them as he grew fat on the offerings of Israel."