

Michigan Stumbles in Court Defending Same-Sex Marriage Ban

The Michigan defense of its **same-sex marriage** ban got off to a rough start on Monday when its first witness at a federal trial was dismissed for not being qualified, dealing a blow in what may be an uphill battle to keep its law on the books.

Last week, two federal judges ruled same-sex marriage restrictions in Texas and Kentucky were unconstitutional, the latest in a string of court victories for **gay rights** advocates.

U.S. District Judge Bernard Friedman said that Sherif Girgis, a doctoral student in philosophy who wrote a book defending marriage as between a man and woman, did not have enough accomplishments to be considered an expert witness.

"Someday you're going to be a great witness, but you're not ready yet," Friedman said.

In opposing gay marriage, Michigan has focused on the well-being of children, arguing that their interests are best served by having both a father and a mother, a position dismissed by gay rights advocates and their allies.

The federal trial in Michigan started late last month and was brought by April DeBoer and Jayne Rowse, who live in a Detroit suburb and are trying to adopt each other's children.

To do so, the couple—both nurses—are hoping to ease restrictions that hinder same-sex couples from making such adoptions as well as overturn a **gay marriage** ban approved by voters in 2004 as a state constitutional amendment.

Support for gay marriage has surged in the United States in

the decade since it first became legal in Massachusetts, with just over half of Americans now supporting the idea, according to a survey released last week.

In all, 17 states plus the District of Columbia recognize gay marriage, including eight states where it became legal in 2013.

The trend has gathered steam since the U.S. **Supreme Court** in June ruled that legally married same-sex couples nationwide are eligible for federal benefits, striking down a key part of the 1996 federal Defense of Marriage Act.

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