

Supreme Court Denies Clerk's Request on Gay Marriage Licenses

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday turned down a Kentucky county clerk's request for an emergency order allowing her to continue to deny marriage licenses to same-sex couples while she appeals a federal judge's order requiring her to do so.

It was unclear whether Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis would begin issuing marriage licenses when the office reopens on Tuesday. Attorneys representing Davis could not be reached immediately for comment.

Davis has refused to issue any marriage licenses since the U.S. Supreme Court in June ruled that same-sex couples had the right to marry under the U.S. Constitution, arguing that it violated her religious beliefs.

Eight people filed a federal lawsuit against Davis in July challenging her office policy of not issuing marriage licenses to any couples – gay or straight. Gay couples requesting licenses have been turned away.

"Hopefully, we'll get marriage licenses being issued in Rowan County without further delay," said attorney Joe Dunman, who represents the plaintiffs.

Dunman said the couples were anxious to get their licenses.

U.S. District Judge David Bunning earlier in August said Davis had to live up to her responsibilities as the county clerk despite her religious convictions, and he issued a preliminary injunction requiring her to issue marriage licenses.

Bunning stayed his order until Aug. 31 to give Davis a chance to ask the appeals court for a stay. The 6th Circuit U.S.

Court of Appeals found she had little chance of prevailing and rejected her request, prompting her filing with the Supreme Court.

At least two other federal lawsuits are challenging Davis' refusal to issue marriage licenses. Davis may face other legal challenges. Attorney General Jack Conway's office is reviewing a request for a special prosecutor to determine if Davis has committed official misconduct, spokeswoman Allison Martin said.

Davis contends that to approve marriage licenses for same-sex applicants would violate her deeply held religious belief that matrimony is between one man and one woman.

Her lawyers said in their request to the Supreme Court that if forced to approve marriage licenses for gay and lesbian couples, the "searing act of validation would forever echo in her conscience."

Rowan County is a rare holdout in the United States, where almost every district allows same-sex couples to marry or will soon do so once they adjust their bureaucratic paperwork.

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