

Tennessee Vows to 'Defend the Law' on Traditional Marriages

Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam will appeal a federal judge's ruling requiring the state to temporarily recognize the legal marriages of three same-sex couples who wed in other states, the state attorney general said on Tuesday in court papers.

Judge Aleta Trauger on Friday ordered Tennessee to recognize the marriages, pending a final decision on the constitutionality of Tennessee's ban on same-sex nuptials.

"We intend to take all necessary steps to defend the law," said Sharon Curtis-Flair, a spokeswoman for Tennessee Attorney General Robert Cooper.

The couples, who were married in other states before moving to Tennessee, challenged the state's law that bars recognition of their marriages and did not directly challenge the constitutionality of the state ban on gay marriage.

Trauger's ruling, in U.S. district court in Nashville, comes as gay rights advocates see growing momentum in their fight to legalize same-sex marriage following a key U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June.

The high court found that legally married same-sex couples nationwide were eligible for federal benefits, in a decision that struck down a key part of the 1996 federal Defense of Marriage Act.

Federal judges have recently struck down bans on gay marriage in several states, including Oklahoma and Texas, and put the rulings on hold pending appeals.

Seventeen U.S. states plus the District of Columbia now allow same-sex marriage.

Editing by David Bailey and Steve Orlofsky

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