

# U.S. Supreme Court Hands Gay-Marriage Advocates a Victory

Gay marriage advocates won another two victories on Wednesday as the U.S. Supreme Court allowed Kansas to become the 33rd U.S. state where same-sex couples can wed and a federal judge struck down South Carolina's ban.

The high court declined a request from Kansas officials to block U.S. District Court Judge Daniel Crabtree's Nov. 4 ruling that struck down the state's gay marriage ban as a violation of the U.S. Constitution.

Two of the nine justices, conservatives Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, said in the brief court order they would have granted the stay.

In Charleston, U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel ruled that South Carolina is bound by an earlier federal appeals court decision striking down Virginia's similar law. Gergel's decision will not take effect for one week, allowing South Carolina time to appeal.

That could allow gay couples to file for marriage licenses or begin receiving them starting Nov. 20 if the state cannot obtain a further delay through the courts.

South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson, a Republican, said he would appeal Wednesday's ruling.

Wednesday's court actions follow decisions last week rejecting bans in Missouri and West Virginia, the latest in a series of such federal district court rulings across the nation.

Although gay marriage advocates have had the advantage in the courts over the past year, the landscape changed last week when a Cincinnati-based federal appeals court became the first to uphold gay marriage bans.

That decision by the 6th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals backing four states' bans created a split within the courts, increasing the chances the Supreme Court will rule once and for all on whether states can ban gay marriage.

The high court has declined to take up cases that would lead to a definitive ruling on gay marriage, allowing gay marriage to proceed in five states when it refused to hear appeals in seven cases in October.

Also on Wednesday, a federal judge in Mississippi heard arguments in a case brought by plaintiffs seeking to end that state's gay marriage ban.

U.S. District Judge Carlton W. Reeves said he will decide "as soon as possible" whether to grant a preliminary injunction against the ban.

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