

# With Threats, Bakers Who Refused to Make Lesbian Wedding Cake Warned to Do This by Monday

Two Christian bakers who refused to bake a cake for a lesbian wedding have been ordered to pay \$135,000 in damages by July 13 or else the state of Oregon could place a lien on their home.

Aaron and Melissa Klein, the owners of Sweet Cakes by Melissa, were punished by the state's Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) for unlawfully discriminating against a same-sex couple.

The Kleins, who are devout evangelical Christians, argued that baking the cake would be a violation of their religious beliefs.

The BOLI ruling ordered the mom-and-pop bakers to pay \$135,000 to the lesbian couple. They were also slapped with a gag order that prohibits them from speaking publicly about their refusal to participate in or bake wedding cakes for same-sex unions.

And now they have until July 13 to pay the damages or else face additional fines and a possible lien on their home.

"This is intimidation and bullying—that's exactly what it is," Klein told me in a telephone interview." They are trying to strong-arm me into handing over \$135,000 to the two girls and if I win on appeal—they will never pay me back."

A BOLI spokesman confirmed they sent a standard payment letter to the Kleins' attorney.

"The letter informs them that if we do not hear from them, we

may turn the matter over to the Department of Revenue, which can place a lien on real property," the spokesman told me.

BOLI said they would also be willing to accept either a full payment or payment arrangements.

"Of course, they can also ask for a stay of enforcement while they pursue their appeal," the spokesman said.

But there's a catch. The person who will determine whether or not to stay the order—is BOLI Commissioner Brad Avakian—a vocal supporter of the LGBTQIA movement.

"The judge, jury and executioner are all in one place," said Anna Harmon, the Kleins' attorney. "He is intent on using his office to root out thought and speech with which he personally disagrees."

Harmon, who is affiliated with Alliance Defending Freedom, said they were expecting the payment letter that came from BOLI.

"This letter, while it's the normal procedure, continues to show the state is not backing down," she told me. "They don't think they did anything wrong here."

Avakian's strong arm tactics against the Christian bakers have outraged Christians across the nation.

"This guy would make Mussolini proud," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research council. "This is a wannabe dictator."

It certainly appears that Avakian and the state of Oregon have declared war on the Klein family.

"Not only do they want to drive them out of business, but they want to make them homeless," Perkins told me.

The Kleins say they are filing a stay and do plan on appealing

the state's decision.

"Brad and his cohorts at BOLI have overstepped their constitutional rights in requiring me to cease and desist from my constitutional freedom," Mr. Klein said. "I will fight them with every last breath I have."

Mrs. Klein said she would not be intimidated by Avakian's hard line tactics.

"We are so going to fight this, oh my gosh," she said. "It's making us stronger and emboldening us to stand up to this. Aaron and I are fighting for every American out there—for their freedom. We are not backing down at all."

And while the viciousness of the attacks against the Kleins might be unsettling—Harmon said it really should serve as a source of inspiration.

"What a time to be an American," she said. "It's a hard time—our freedoms are challenged—but what a time to be able to stand and have courage and say, 'I have a moment in time where I can be a voice for that.'"

And the Kleins are not ready to throw in the towel just yet.

"He definitely messed with the wrong Christians," Mrs. Klein told me.

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