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Washington state and the ACLU sue florist for refusing to sell flowers for gay wedding because of Christian beliefs

The state allows gay marriage and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Barronelle Stutzman of Arlene's Flowers in Richland has resisted efforts to reverse her policy.

BY [DAVID KNOWLES](#)[Follow](#)

/ NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Published: Thursday, April 18, 2013, 8:58 PM

/ Updated: Thursday, April 18, 2013, 8:58 PM

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KEPR

Barronelle Stutzman has been sued after rebuffing an ACLU request that she apologize to the couple, donate \$5,000 to a youth center affiliated with the gay community, and agree to sell flowers regardless of the sexual orientation of her customers.

Flowers may not discriminate, but people are another matter.

UHDWHSWRUHV

More pols come out to
support of gay
marriage

The American Civil Liberties Union joined the state of Washington by filing its own lawsuit on Thursday against Arlene's Flowers and its proprietor, Barronelle Stutzman, over the woman's refusal to sell flowers for a same-sex wedding.

On March 1, Robert Ingersoll entered the shop in Richland, a small town approximately 200 miles from Seattle, where he had been buying flowers for years. When he informed Stutzman he was getting married to his boyfriend, Curt Freed, the store owner stopped him cold.

"He said he decided to get married, and before he got through I grabbed his hand and said, 'I am sorry. I can't do your wedding because of my relationship with Jesus Christ,'" Stutzman told [KEPRTV News](#).

Gay marriage was made legal by the voters of Washington in the 2012 election, but protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation have been established in the state since 2006. As a result, Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed a consumer protection lawsuit last week against Arlene's Flowers.



GOOGLE MAPS

"I believe, biblically, that marriage is between a man and a woman. That is my conviction, yours may be different" Stutzman wrote on the Facebook page for Arlene's."

The ACLU then filed a civil suit after Stutzman ignored its demand that she apologize to the couple, donate \$5,000 to a youth center affiliated with the gay community, and agree to sell flowers regardless of the sexual orientation of her customers.

"Because she refused to sell flowers to Mr. Ingersoll and Mr. Freed for their wedding," the ACLU's website states, "defendant Barronelle Stutzman aided Arlene's Flowers in violating the Washington Law Against Discrimination by discriminating against the Plaintiffs on the basis of their sexual orientation."

On the Facebook page for Arlene's Flowers, where thousands of comments have been left since the story became national news, Stutzman held firm in her conviction that she could deny service to the couple based on her religious views.

"I believe, biblically, that marriage is between a man and a woman. That is my conviction, yours may be different," Stutzman wrote on the [Facebook page](#) for Arlene's.



ACLU WASHINGTON

Couple Robert Ingersoll and Curt Freed are at the center of the lawsuit. Ingersoll, a longtime customer, was stopped cold when he told the owner about his intentions to wed Freed. She grabbed his hand and told him her relationship with Jesus prevented her from selling him flowers.

"The florist discriminated against us as a result of our sexual orientation. Because we're a gay couple, she chose not to serve us. We feel like that's something she should not be allowed to do," Freed said.

Filed in Benton County Superior Court, the ACLU suit seeks a court order barring her from discriminating against customers on the basis of sexual orientation as well as unspecified damages.

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DKnowles@nydailynews.com

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Lossip



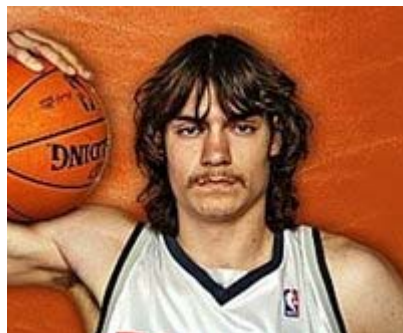
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BANSAW

6

650 days ago

There's got to be freedom of religion. In the UK, the church will have a triple lock legal protection to protect it from being sued by aggressive gay activists when they have to refuse to carry out same-sex weddings. The UK government recognize that. The same protection under law must be given to people like this florist. She absolutely can't be part of a ceremony which is dishonoring to God. Churches are allowed to keep their freedom of religion. So must individuals. Whats happening to this woman is bullying, especially from the ACLU.

Like [REPLY](#)[SHARE](#)**ALBERTROSS10**

0

622 days ago

Martyrdom! Not just for terrorists anymore!

Like [REPLY](#)[SHARE](#)**SHRINIVASA RAMANUJAN**[SHARE](#)³

650 days ago

We as a people have historically put up with things we may disagree with, as a price to pay for freedom. A neonazi speaking on a street corner comes to mind. I suppose, in the future, that protection

from such hateful speech will be provided by legislation (as it is in certain European countries), paradoxically in the name of "civil liberties". True freedom, paid for by the blood of our ancestors, will yield, is yielding, to the "common good" (government), just as Jefferson predicted. This is nothing more than tyranny. I, for one, will be sending this poor lady money to help her fight the government, and the ACLU.

Like [REPLY](#)

CHRISTIENNE

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650 days ago

You do that. I encourage you to send her money to defend herself. However, the proprietor is violating the Washington Law Against Discrimination by discriminating against the Plaintiffs on the basis of their sexual orientation. The law exists as it does, and not the way we wish it to. You can also donate to the Westboro Baptist Church, if this is your position, or any number of bigoted hate groups that use the word "family" in their name. But at the end of the day, you will find yourself on the wrong side of history.

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BRYAN

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The florist has the support of a large portion of the nation, Westboro Baptist Church has the support of virtually noone. By mentioning the two together you may be trying to equate them, if so, you're in the wrong.

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D CLARK

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