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Ky. Clerk Invokes 'God's Authority,' Still Refuses To Grant Same-Sex Marriage Licenses

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AP Photo / Timothy D. Easley

By CLAIRE GALOFARO, Associated Press Published September 1, 2015, 8:20 AM EDT 17941 views

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MOREHEAD, Ky. (AP) — A county clerk in Kentucky has again refused to issue marriage licenses to gay couples, invoking her religious beliefs and "God's authority" — this time in defiance of a U.S. Supreme Court ruling against her.

On Tuesday morning, Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis' office denied the licenses to at least two couples. At first, Davis was in her office with the door closed and blinds drawn. But she emerged a few minutes later, telling the couples and the activists gathered there that her office is continuing to deny the licenses "under God's authority."

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Davis asked David Moore and David Ermold, a couple who has been rejected four times by her office, to leave. They refused, surrounded by reporters and cameras.

"We're not leaving until we have a license," Ermold said.

"Then you're going to have a long day," Davis told him.

From the back of the room, Davis' supporters said: "Praise the Lord! ... Stand your ground."

Other activists shouted that Davis is a bigot and told her: "Do your job."

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday declined to intervene in the case, leaving Davis no legal grounds to refuse to grant licenses to gay couples. A district judge could now hold her in contempt, which can carry steep fines or jail time.

Davis has steadfastly refused to issue the licenses, saying her deeply held Christian beliefs don't let her endorse gay marriages.

Davis stopped issuing all marriage licenses in the days after U.S. Supreme Court legalized gay marriage across the nation. Two gay couples and two straight couples sued her, arguing that she must fulfill her duties as an elected official despite her personal religious faith. A federal judge ordered her to issue the licenses, and an appeals court upheld that decision. Her lawyers with the Liberty Counsel filed a last-ditch appeal to the Supreme Court on Friday, asking that they grant her "asylum for her conscience."

Justice Elena Kagan, who oversees the 6th district, referred Davis' request to the full court, which denied the stay without comment.

On Tuesday morning, shortly after Davis' remarks, the sheriff's office cleared the county office of those gathered to support both sides of the issue.

The two groups lined up on either side of the courthouse entrance to chant at each other. Davis' supporters told her to "stand firm," while gay-rights activists shouted "do your job."

The rejected couples' supporters called the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed the lawsuit on their behalf. They asked that their attorneys file to have Davis held in contempt.

Randy Smith, leading the group supporting Davis, said he knows following their instruction to "stand firm" might mean Davis goes to jail.

"But at the end of the day, we have to stand before God, which has higher authority than the Supreme Court," he said.

Ermold hugged Moore, his partner of 17 years, and they cried and swayed as they left the clerk's office. Davis' supporters marched by, chanting.

"I feel sad, I feel devastated," Ermold said. "I feel like I've been humiliated on such a national level, I can't even comprehend it."

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