

Georgia insight

Sue Ella Deadwyler
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“She hath done what she could.”
Mark 14:8a
“...and having done all ... stand.”
Ephesians 6:13c

Religious Liberty, the Bedrock of Freedom

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

– The Constitution of the United States of America, Bill of Rights Amendment I, Ratified December 15, 1791

On June 11, 1776 the Continental Congress appointed a five-member committee¹ to draft a declaration patterned after two documents from the State of Virginia – a Declaration of Rights and Thomas Jefferson’s preamble to the first Constitution of Virginia. At two o’clock in the afternoon of July 4, 1776, The Declaration of Independence was adopted and signed by 56 members of Congress, including three congressmen from Georgia – Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, and George Walton. Following is the heading on the original copy:

In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

Signatures of the 56 who signed it are preserved on the document. Indeed, the Declaration was adopted unanimously by all thirteen states, although several congressmen refused to sign it.

The Declaration of Independence: America’s Great Religious Document²

- The Declaration affirms God’s existence as a “self-evident” truth that requires no further discussion or debate. The rights it defines are God-given and the actions of its signers are God-inspired.
- The Declaration contains five references to God – God as supreme Lawmaker, God as Creator of all men, God as the Source of all rights, God as the world’s supreme Judge, and God as our Protector on whom we can rely.
- The Declaration proclaims that life and liberty are unalienable gifts of God – natural rights – which no person or government can rightfully take away. It affirms that the purpose of government is to secure our God-given unalienable individual rights and that government derives its powers from the consent of the governed. The Declaration reduced government from master to servant, for the first time in history.
- The unchangeable Declaration of Independence forever pledges the firm reliance of the American people on the continued protection of God’s Divine Providence.
- Many men who signed it paid for their courage with their lives and fortunes.
- Therefore, citizens and residents of the U.S. are able to enjoy freedom and independence.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31³

¹ Thomas Jefferson (designated chairman), John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston and Roger Sherman

² Eagle Forum bulletin for distribution in churches and organizations, and for Fourth of July speeches and sermons

³ The back side of the Eagle Forum bulletin includes this quote from the Bible. Phyllis Schlafly founded Eagle Forum in 1972, and, immediately, it became leader of the pro-family movement. Her bulletin explained that school children who stumble over the “big words” in the Declaration do so because they were not taught how to read by phonics.

A Peek into the Persecution of Biblical Morality¹ in the U.S.²

City sues women's center for denying biological male access to women's overnight shelter.

When Downtown Hope Center in Anchorage, Alaska refused a biological man identifying as a woman access to the women's shelter, the city filed a "gender identity" complaint against the center, although it had arranged for the inebriated injured man to be taken to a local hospital.

ADF filed a federal lawsuit prohibiting misapplication of the city's anti-discrimination law.

In June Colorado cake artist Jack Phillips and his cake shop were sued ... again!

The attorney that filed the unsuccessful complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights Commission in 2017, sued Phillips again in June over the same custom cake request. Now, he wants Phillips to pay over \$100,000 for declining to violate his faith and create/sell a pro-homosexual cake.

ADF filed a motion in state court to dismiss this new attack on Phillips' public exercise of faith.

Nonprofits that fundraise in California must give the state a list of its major donors.

Thomas More Law Center, a Michigan-based nonprofit that defends and promotes religious freedom, moral and family values, and the sanctity of human life, has a small number of donors who live in California. In 2012, the office of the California attorney general began demanding names and addresses of the Center's major donors, although some of its donors, clients and employees have faced intimidation, boycott, and an assassination attempt from opponents.

ADF appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

New York City Council prohibits counseling against same-sex attraction or transgender ID.

In 2018 New York adopted a law prohibiting psychotherapists or counselors from addressing unwanted same-sex attraction or patient confusion over gender identity. Result: professionals are fined \$10,000 per patient counseled away from LGBTQ, though patients request the help.

In June ADF went to federal court to prohibit enforcement; in September NY City repealed the law.

In 2017 Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) adopted a policy allowing biological males who identify as female to compete in girls' athletic events.

CIAC's policy violates Title IX, a federal law designed to protect equal athletic opportunities for women and girls. However, since the CIAC policy was adopted, boys have consistently deprived female athletes of honors and opportunities to compete at elite levels. In August, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights granted the request of three Connecticut teen track athletes to investigate their allegations of illegal discrimination.

ADF is representing the athletes who formally requested the investigation.

After teaching French at West Point High in Virginia for seven years, he was fired last year.

Peter Vlaming lost his job after one of his favorite students decided to identify as a boy, adopt a masculine name and be addressed and referenced by male pronouns. Vlaming said, "Requiring me to refer to her with male pronouns was ... trying to force me and others to think of her as a boy ... ignoring what we knew to be true.... 'Start using the pronouns the student wants to hear,' they insisted – 'or else lose my job.' ... If I bowed to the administrators' wishes, I'd be letting them violate my freedom of speech, by forcing me to express ideas with which I don't agree. I told them I couldn't do that. And they fired me."

On his behalf, ADF filed suit in state court against the school district.

¹ Note: Biblical morality is the target of persecution in five of the above six cases.

² *Faith & Justice* by Alliance Defending Freedom, 11-19, Volume XII, Issue 4. This is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

EEOC Sues Funeral Home for Transgender Discrimination

Supreme Court: *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. EEOC*¹

“Redefining ‘Sex’ to mean ‘gender identity’ creates chaos, is unfair to women and girls, and puts employers in difficult situations.”

– John Bursch, ADF Vice President of Appellate Advocacy, Senior Counsel, Arguing before U.S. Supreme Court

On October 8, 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments concerning a male who was hired in 2007 as a funeral director. At that time, he agreed to follow the employer’s company policies, including a sex-specific dress code. However, almost six years after he was hired, he announced plans to dress and present as a woman in his interaction with grieving families.

For two weeks, the owner of the Michigan funeral home considered how such a change would affect other employees and grief-stricken families at funerals. When he failed to agree with the transgender plan, the transgender complained to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which sued the owner and Harris Funeral Homes for sex discrimination.

The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against Harris under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and redefined² “sex” to include “gender identity.” If this redefinition is allowed to stand, various adverse consequences would continue to occur, as already evident in the U.S.

Though protected by law, equal opportunities for women in sports would be denied.

A female Connecticut high school runner is being forced to compete against boys in regional track and field events. Two male athletes who identify as female now dominate the field.

Freedom to speak negatively about gender identity would be silenced and jobs would be lost.

The University of Louisville fired the chief of the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology after he expressed his views on treating youth experiencing gender dysphoria.

Sex-specific privacy policies for male or female restrooms, locker rooms are threatened.

A female student at Boyertown High School in Pennsylvania, who encountered a boy in the girls’ restroom, later learned of the new policy that opened locker rooms and restrooms to students of both sexes, based on the students’ belief about their own gender. The policy was changed without notifying students or parents, as occurred in Decatur, Georgia schools.

Adverse Effects of redefining “Sex” to include “Gender ID”

- Females must compete with males in sports competitions, to accommodate those in society who reject the biological fact that God created only two sexes, male and female.
- Professionals who fail to affirm variant gender identities are fired to pacify a few activists.
- Employers lose power over good policies, in order to accommodate a single complainant.
- Students are forced to use sex integrated public accommodations, despite cultural outrage.
- More school districts and cities³ would adopt laws to *prohibit counseling against LGBTQ but require affirmation of gender identity change*, despite lack of factual scientific support.

Goal of the Harris Case

Harris asks the U.S. Supreme Court to clarify the fact that unelected officials, including judges, do not have power to redefine “sex” in federal law. Only Congress has such power.

¹ *Faith & Justice* by Alliance Defending Freedom, November 2019, Volume XII, Issue 4

² Redefining “sex” in federal law is the responsibility of Congress. It is not under judicial jurisdiction.

³ The City of Atlanta adopted a ban on conversion therapy in 2019. **H.B. 580** that was introduced in the Georgia General Assembly in 2019 would prohibit conversion therapy. It did not pass but is alive for the 2020 session. See page 4.

Selected Battles from 2019, Held for Action in 2020

H.B. 426 Hate Crime, Enhances Penalties for crimes, actually or perceived to be, based on the victim's sexual orientation or gender. It passed the House 96-64 March 7th, requiring added penalties for crimes based on lifestyle of the victim and thoughts of the person charged with the crime. For identical crimes, two penalties would be created – a lesser penalty if the victim is a “straight” individual, but a stiffer penalty if the victim is of a variant sexual orientation.

ACTION – Oppose in 2020. LGBTQ victims are valued over other victims. Call Judiciary Committee Senators Stone, Ch., 404 463-1314; Cowser, V-Ch., 463-1366; Tillery, Sec., 656-0089; Heath, 656-3943; Jones, H., 463-3942; Kennedy, 656-0045; Ligon, 463-1383; Parent, 656-5109; Rhett, 656-0054; Strickland 656-7454.

S.B. 104 Non-Resuscitation of Minor Requires Parental Consent passed the Senate 46-0 March 5th. It requires consent before an order not to resuscitate may be issued, thereby changing current law allowing parental consent before non-resuscitation is ordered. It defines parent as a “biological parent, legal guardian, custodian or other person with legal authority to act on behalf of either a minor or an adult without decision-making capacity.” Note the inclusion of minor and adult children. Preserving parental authority is the issue.

ACTION – Support in 2020. Call House Judiciary Committee Representatives Fleming, Ch., 404 656-5125; Jones, T., V-Ch., 656-0213; Kelley, Sec., 656-5024; Nix, Randy, ExO, 656-5146; Efstration, 656-5105; Powell, J., 656-5141; Reeves, 651-7737; Rich, 655-0254; Rutledge, 656-0254; Scoggins, 656-0325; Silcox, 656-3949; Welch, 656-5912.

H.B. 53 Student and Educator Faith Protection Act introduced January 29th would assure students and faculty freedom of religious speech in public schools. Students could (a) express religious beliefs in homework, artwork, and written or oral assignments without discrimination for religious content. (b) Students and staff could pray/participate in religious expression and activities before, during, and after school and (c) have prayer groups, religious clubs, “see you at the pole” or other religious gatherings before, during, and after school. (d) Religious groups could use school facilities available to others and (e) advertise/announce meetings. Students and staff (f) could wear jewelry or clothes that display religious messages or religious symbols.

ACTION – Support in 2020. Call House Education Committee Representatives Jasperse, Ch., 404 656-5943; Cheokas, V-Ch., 656-0152; Benton, Sec., 656-5126; Belton, 656-3947; Cantrell, 656-0152; Carter, 656-0220; Dickerson, 656-0314; England, 463-2245; Erwin, 656-0188; Evans, 656-0109; Glanton 657-1803; Hill, 656-0325; Howard, 656-6372. Jones, Jan, 656-5072; Jones, Todd, 656-0213; LaRiccia, 651-7737; Lopez, 656-6372; Nix, 656-516; Nguyen, 656-0314; Paris, 656-0109; Setzler, 656-7857; Stovall, 656-0314; Tanner, 656-9210; Wilson, 656-6372.

H.B. 580 Conversion Therapy, Prohibit introduced March 7, 2019 by Representative Matthew Wilson adds a new Code section to control professional counselors. Entitled the “Youth Mental Health Protection Act,” it is a gag order for professional counselors. (a) It *prohibits counseling anyone under 18 against* alternate lifestyles (LGBTQ), but (b) *requires positive, affirming counseling for anyone undergoing or considering gender transition*, an alternate sexual orientation, or variant gender identity. Conversion therapy is any attempt to change sexual orientation or gender identity or behavior or gender expression or eliminate or reduce same-sex romantic attraction or feeling. If this passes, professional counselors in Georgia may lose their license if they counsel anyone under 18 against alternate lifestyles.

ACTION – Oppose in 2020. Call House Regulated Industries Committee Representatives Powell, Alan, Ch., 404 463-3793; Jones, Jeff, V-Ch., 656-0178; Hawkins, Sec., 656-7855; Bennett, 656-0202; Caldwell, 656-0152; Carpenter, 656-1803; Collins, J, 656-1803; Cooke, 656-0188; Cooper, 656-5069; Ehrhart, 656-0152; Harrell, 656-5103; Jasperse, 656-5943; Jones, Jan, 656-5072; Kirby, 656-0177; Martin, 656-5064; Mitchell, 656-0126; Ridley, 656-0325; Rogers, 651-7737; Rutledge, 656-0254; Smith, M., 656-0265; Stephens, 656-0265; Washburn, 656-0152; Welch, 656-5912; Williams, Rick, 656-0287; Williamson, 656-5024.

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