

Supreme Court Declines to Hear Challenge to Landmark Same-Sex Marriage Ruling

The justices refused to take up an appeal from former Kentucky clerk Kim Davis, who argued that her religious beliefs justified denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The decision leaves the 2015 *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling firmly in place.

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The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday declined to hear a challenge to its landmark 2015 decision legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide, effectively upholding the ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

The case, brought by former Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis, stemmed from her refusal to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples following the *Obergefell* decision, citing religious

objections. Davis had appealed a lower court ruling that held her liable for damages, but the justices dismissed the petition without comment, as is common when certiorari is denied.

The denial comes amid ongoing debates over religious liberty and LGBTQ rights, with Davis arguing that her actions were protected under the First Amendment. Lower courts had rejected her claims, finding that she violated the constitutional rights of couples like David Ermold and David Moore, who sued after being denied a license in 2015. A federal jury in Kentucky awarded the couple \$100,000 in damages last year, a decision upheld on appeal.

Advocates for marriage equality welcomed the Supreme Court's decision, viewing it as a reaffirmation of Obergefell amid concerns about potential reversals by the conservative-majority court. Sarah Kate Ellis, president of GLAAD, stated in a release that the ruling "sends a clear message that discrimination under the guise of religion has no place in our society." Conversely, Davis's legal team at Liberty Counsel expressed disappointment, maintaining that the case raised important questions about accommodating religious beliefs in public service.

The Obergefell ruling, decided 5-4, established that the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees same-sex couples the right to marry, invalidating state bans across the country. Since then, the court has addressed related issues, such as in the 2023 case *303 Creative v. Elenis*, which allowed certain businesses to refuse services based on free speech grounds, but it has not revisited the core marriage right.

This latest rejection underscores the stability of marriage equality for now, though legal experts note that future challenges could arise in different contexts. No further appeals are available in Davis's case, closing a chapter that began nearly a decade ago.