Daily Press
dailypress.com

Virginia gay marriage decision gets split reception

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7:49 PM EST, February 14, 2014

A federal judge's decision late Thursday to lift the ban on the state's gay marriage law has been received with mixed views.

Some say the move by U.S. District Judge Arenda L. Wright Allen is long overdue for the state, while others say she ignored their votes and overstepped her power. The following is a sampling of views following Thursday's ruling:

"The steady march toward equality continues today with this historic decision. Support for the freedom to marry has seen an amazing increase in the past few years, and we will continue to work to ensure that all couples have access to the dignity and protection that only comes with marriage."

Joshua Block

staff attorney, ACLU Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Project.

"Regardless of one's stance on marriage, the people of Virginia were disenfranchised by this ruling as our voice and our vote that amended our Constitution have been rendered meaningless by a single federal judge with the assistance of our own attorney general. Protecting a timeless institution for the well-being of children was the will of the overwhelming majority of Virginians, and this ruling denies this important state interest as it places the desires of adults over the outcomes of children."

Victoria Cobb

President, Family Foundation of Virginia

"I applaud the court's decision to strike down Virginia's ban on same-sex marriage and help ensure that all of Virginia's citizens are treated equally under the law. Marriage is a fundamental and an incredibly personal right of all Virginians, one that government should not interfere with. Unfortunately Virginia has a notorious history of intervening in decisions about whom our citizens can and cannot marry, a history which we must put behind us. This historic decision brings us one step closer to ensuring that all Virginians, regardless of sexual orientation, have equal rights under the law."

Virginia Lt. Governor Ralph S. Northam

"The decision issued by federal district Judge Wright Allen appropriately issued in the cover of darkness is a syllabus of errors, a compendium of ineptitude, and a farce claiming authority. Legislating through the Courts against the will of the people is lawless disregard for our representative form of government … Judge Wright-Allen clearly lacks judicial temperament, has absolutely no sense of judicial restraint, exhibits signs of deracinated thinking and should be impeached. The natural marriage relationship of man and woman predates all religions."

Virginia Delegate Bob Marshall

Author of the state's 2006 marriage amendment

"It shows me that Virginia is in transition in many ways, but I don't think Virginia is unique in the country on this issue. I think that most people agree that public opinion on gay rights and specifically on the right to marriage equality is changing at a rapid pace throughout the country — not just Virginia."

Allison Orr Larsen

associate professor of law, William and Mary Law School

"I am pleased that the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia in Norfolk has ruled in favor of marriage equality. This ruling is based on sound reasoning and is consistent with a growing list of decisions by courts all over the country, beginning with Loving v. Virginia and including the recent Supreme Court decision in U.S. v. Windsor that struck down the so-called Defense of Marriage Act."

Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

"I think that she did not take into account whatsoever the voice of the people. She also used the Loving v. Virginia case for an interracial couple and that has nothing to do with the issue of homosexual marriage. It's apples and oranges. I think she did not have the right to make that decision."

Frances Bouton

Suffolk resident who rallied against same sex marriage at federal courthouse in Norfolk