



WISCONSIN FAMILY COUNCIL
Marriage|Family|Life|Liberty

Church Connection October 2017

*Strengthening,
Preserving
& Promoting
Marriage,
Family, Life &
Religious Liberty*

*Thus saith the Lord
God; let it suffice you, O
princes of Israel: remove
violence and spoil, and
execute judgment and
justice.*

Ezekiel 45:9a

*To do justice and
judgment is more
acceptable to the LORD
than sacrifice.*

Proverbs 21:7

Join us for...

*"Punching Holes in the
Darkness: Equipping
Christians To Bring Light
to the Critical Issues of Our
Day"*

A presentation by Julaine
Appling, WFC president

Thurs., Nov. 2, Pizza Ranch,
Waupun, 6-8 p.m.

Call 888-378-7395 to register
or for more details.

Register online at
wifamilycouncil.org/events

For further background
and details about the court
case discussed in this issue
of "Church Connection"
visit adfllegal.org

Religious Liberty Wins in Wisconsin!

August 1, 2017, was a significant day for religious liberty in Wisconsin. At 2 p.m. Judge Niess entered his Dane County Courtroom to hear arguments in *Amy Lynn Photography Studio v. City of Madison, et al.* This was an important case for religious liberty in The Badger State.

A year ago this past spring, WFC received an email from Amy, a young Christian photographer and blogger living in Madison. Amy had become uneasy—for good reason—with publicly indicating that she did not provide photography services for same-sex weddings. She wanted to know what legal protections she might have in making that statement regarding her home-based and internet-based company, Amy Lynn Photography Studio. We immediately referred her to our national legal ally, Alliance Defending Freedom, who ultimately stepped in to represent Amy and her studio.



Amy Lawson,
Photo courtesy of Alliance
Defending Freedom

Amy and her business brought what is known as a "pre-enforcement" challenge against the City of Madison and the State of Wisconsin, which essentially means she sued the city and the state before either entity tried to bring charges against her. She alleged the city's public accommodations ordinance and the state's public accommodations law prohibited her from using her creative talents and skills in ways consistent with her conscience and religious beliefs. Amy contended the Madison ordinance would actually force her to use her professional creativity to support activities she doesn't believe are right, such as same-sex weddings and abortion.

After about 35 minutes of discussion to make sure all parties understood what each was seeking, Judge Niess determined what he wanted to do. He said to the City of Madison's attorneys and to the State of Wisconsin's attorneys—both of whom had asked the court to dismiss the case—that as far as he could tell both the city and the

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Pray...

- For revival in our country
- For Christians to stand for truth and to speak the truth clearly and in love
- For our elected officials to recognize that they will give account to God for how they lead
- For the financial needs of Wisconsin Family Council

Given the issues we face in our country, it is a good idea to remind ourselves of exactly what our rights are according to the U.S. Constitution. Relative to freedom of religion and expression, the first amendment states: *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.*

“We establish no religion in this country, nor will we ever. But those who believe must be free to speak of and act on their belief, to apply moral teaching to public questions.”

President Ronald Reagan, 1984

state believed Amy and Amy Lynn Photography Studio, as a home-based and internet-based enterprise, did not run afoul of either the city’s ordinance or the state’s law. Both sides then agreed to the judge’s idea of his issuing orders to that effect, although agreeing was harder for the Madison attorneys than for the state’s attorneys, to be sure.

Within the month, Judge Niess issued two declaratory judgments stating that neither Madison’s law nor Wisconsin’s law applied to Amy and her business and therefore neither law stopped Amy from operating her business in accordance with her faith.

The brevity and the outcome of the hearing were surprising. This was a considerable victory for free speech and religious freedom right in the heart of one of the most liberal cities of our state and the entire country. It is right and good to rejoice in and thank God for the outcome of this case.

It is important to note this case was not about a business that operates with a store-front. What’s unique is this is a home-operated business with an internet component. That said, we now have case law—from a Dane County court—that says Wisconsin individuals, including Madison residents, who operate businesses in the way that Amy Lawson operates hers, will not be forced to violate their conscience or their religious beliefs in their professional work. We would be happy for rulings like this on any day from any court. That it happened in 40 minutes in a Dane County Court makes it just that much more gratifying.

As Jonathan Scruggs from Alliance Defending Freedom observed, *“The court’s announcement has important implications for everyone in Wisconsin...The court found...that such professionals cannot be punished under public accommodation laws for exercising their artistic freedom...No one should be threatened with punishment for having views that the government doesn’t favor.”*

To be sure, much remains to be done to restore and insure the protection of religious liberty in our state and country; but in this case, religious liberty definitely won in Wisconsin.

About Wisconsin Family Council

Wisconsin Family Council is a 501 (c)(3) organization that has been advancing Judeo-Christian principles and values in Wisconsin since 1986. We have largely done this by informing Wisconsin citizens, policymakers and churches about the important legislative and cultural issues so that they can be involved in strengthening, preserving and promoting marriage, family, life and religious liberty in our state.

“Church Connection” is published monthly by WFC and is available to churches in Wisconsin.

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