



## **SB 522: Using Religion to Justify Taxpayer-Funded Discrimination Against Virtually Anyone**

At least 17 bills in the 2017 Texas legislative session would allow the use of religion to discriminate against LGBT people or to disregard laws someone doesn't like. This radically redefines religious freedom to mean the right to use religion to hurt people who are different or who don't share the same beliefs. Some bills – including SB 522 – permit government officials to discriminate against virtually anyone who doesn't meet their personal moral standards.

### **SB 522 Promotes Taxpayer-Funded Discrimination**

- SB 522 would allow county clerks and other public officials and employees to refuse to issue marriage licenses to virtually ANY couples to whose marriage they might have personal religious objections.
- If county officials and employees are unwilling to issue licenses to such couples, the county would force those couples to seek licenses from private contractors or from officials in an entirely different county who are willing to do so.

### **SB 522 Allows Unequal Treatment Under the Law**

- SB 522 would clearly allow unequal treatment under the law for couples seeking marriage licenses. That's not religious freedom. That's discrimination.
- The bill would clearly allow public officials and employees to use their personal religious beliefs to refuse to issue licenses to same-sex couples. Doing so would create special obstacles or delays that other couples would not face.
- But officials or employees could also use religion to justify refusing to provide marriage certificates to, for example, people who have been previously divorced, people who have lived together or women who have become pregnant outside of marriage.

### **SB 522 Would Leave Taxpayers on the Hook to Pay the Costs of Discrimination**

- County taxpayers would still pay the salaries of public officials and employees who refuse to do their jobs. But they could also be forced to pay private contractors to issue marriage licenses.
- Taxpayers would also have to cover the costs of defending against or settling lawsuits brought by couples who have suffered from this discrimination. Taxpayers in Hood County in North Texas, for example, had to cover nearly \$44,000 in legal fees for a same-sex couple who sued when the county clerk refused to issue them a marriage license in 2015.