INSIGHTS + NEWS

Mississippi Federal Court Ruling a Win for Same-Sex Couples Hoping to Adopt, but State Continues to Wrestle with LGBT Rights

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Mississippi lawmakers banned adoptions by same-sex couples in 2000. Yesterday, Judge Daniel Jordan, of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi, issued a preliminary injunction ruling in favor of same-sex couples and finding that Mississippi's ban on allowing same-sex couples to adopt "violates the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution." Judge Jordan directed John Davis, the executive director of the Department of Human Services, to stop enforcing the law. The Plaintiffs' attorney opined that "DHS will have a very, very hard time convincing a judge on appeal," and that the ban is effectively over. Mississippi was the last state in the country to have a statutory ban on same-sex adoption.

The fight isn't over for Mississippi, though. By a 69-45 vote, Mississippi's House of Representatives passed a Senate version of a so-called religious freedom bill. Now, the bill goes to the Governor, Phil Bryant, to sign or veto. Governor Bryant and other Mississippi state officials have historically been vocal in their opposition of same-sex marriage. The bill, if signed, would allow businesses and religious groups to deny members of the LGBT community services such as counseling and adoption support and protects those groups from punishment if their actions are "consistent with a sincerely held religious belief or moral conviction." Despite yesterday's courtroom victory for same-sex couples, the legislative climate in Mississippi with respect to LGBT rights remains one to watch.

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