



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 11, 2014

## Texas Commission Investigates Fox Sports Over Firing of Christian Commentator

A Texas state employment commission has taken up a [religious discrimination charge](#) against Fox Sports for its 2013 firing of commentator Craig James (shown) over comments he made about homosexuality and same-sex “marriage” a year earlier during his U.S. Senate run. In a March 6 release, Liberty Institute, the Texas legal advocacy group that is representing James in his suit against Fox, reported that the Texas Workforce Commission has accepted its discrimination charge against Fox Sports Southwest for firing James, a well-known college football analyst, over his religious beliefs about marriage.



Liberty Institute attorney Hiram Sasser said that the move by the commission “is a serious step toward holding Fox Sports accountable for violating the law and the religious liberty of Craig James.”

In August 2013, Fox Sports Southwest introduced James on the air as its new college football analyst. But after just one appearance on a post-game show he co-hosted with Fox’s Erin Hartigan and former NFL quarterback Tony Banks, James was unceremoniously fired after comments he made during a 2012 debate for the Texas U.S. Senate primary were published in a news report.

Asked during the debate about his views on homosexuality and same-sex “marriage,” James explained that as a Christian he could not support unbiblical behavior. James said he believed that America’s “moral fiber is sliding down a slope that is going to be hard to stop if we don’t stand up.” He emphasized that he was “a guy who believes in [marriage between] a man and a woman, [and] the greatest government is occurring in a home at night between a husband and wife, Adam and Eve, and what the Bible says.”

As for same-sex “marriage,” James said that “if someone chooses to do that, that’s them. And God’s going to judge each one of us in this room for our actions. And in that case right there, they’re going to have to answer to the Lord for their actions.” He added that “we should not give benefits to those in civil unions. We have to stay strong on this. This is important.... We have a fiscal issue in this country, [but] we also have a moral issue in this country, and as Christians we’ve got to stand up.”

As soon as James’ comments came to light, he disappeared from the Fox show, with the network tersely announcing that he would “not be making any further appearances on Fox Sports Southwest’s football coverage this season.” When queried about the quick departure, a spokesman for Fox Sports explained: “We just asked ourselves how James’ statements would play in our human resources department. He couldn’t say those things here.”

After the termination James immediately retained Liberty Institute to represent him in a discrimination suit against the network. In an [e-mail to the network](#), Liberty attorney Jeffrey Mateer wrote that Fox’s



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firing of James “raises serious questions of religious discrimination, unlawful disparagement of the character of Craig James, malicious interference with his employment, and unlawful termination of your employment agreement with him.”

Mateer charged that Fox officials knew, “or should have known,” about James’ well-publicized positions on homosexuality and same-sex “marriage” before they pursued him for the job. He added that James’ opinions were completely personal and had no bearing on his ability to do the job for which Fox hired him. Mateer challenged that Fox Sports’ firing of James “is a severe violation of Mr. James’ religious liberty ... and an affront to all Americans who cherish that bedrock principle of American freedom.”

Following the e-mail Fox Sports officials appeared to change their reason for James’ rapid termination. “At Fox Sports we respect all points of view, and despite reports to the contrary, the decision to no longer use Craig James in our college football coverage was simply because he was not a good fit for Fox Sports,” a Fox spokesman insisted. “Mr. James, while both experienced and knowledgeable, is a polarizing figure in the college sports community. Regrettably, the decision to use him was not properly vetted, and as a result he will no longer provide commentary on Fox Sports Southwest’s college football coverage.”

Liberty Institute’s Hiram Sasser reacted to Fox’s new justification, saying that “Fox Sports cannot revise history and pretend they did not tell the public the reason he was fired was because of his religious views on marriage. Fox Sports has made it clear that despite our efforts to resolve this matter amicably, they are unwilling to follow the law. They will be held accountable.”

The beginning of that accountability appears to be at hand as the Texas Workforce Commission agreed that there was enough evidence against Fox Sports to move ahead with an investigation of religious discrimination. Sasser said that he was confident his client would be vindicated. “We have the information to move forward, and we will win on a defamation claim or an employment claim,” Sasser said. “We will let Fox pick their poison.”

During a March 6 interview on the [Family Research Council’s Washington Week](#) online radio program, Sasser emphasized that Fox Sports has its back up against the wall in the case, explaining that he believes either the Texas Workforce Commission would ultimately sue the network or would give the go-ahead for Liberty Institute to follow through with its religious discrimination suit on behalf of James.

“I have two stacks of documents Fox Sports has provided us,” Sasser told FRC president Tony Perkins. “One stack of documents supports our claim that they engaged in unlawful religious discrimination. The other stack of documents I can’t discuss the contents of because they’re marked ‘confidential.’ They’re secret documents that Fox Sports doesn’t want you to see. But I really like those documents and can’t wait to use those in the courtroom.”

He added, “I don’t know why Fox Sports is continuing to fight this. Every day that goes by the cost of getting out of this discrimination claim is going up for Fox Sports.”

Craig James said that Fox Sports’ treatment of him was “like a sucker punch. For someone to call you and offer you a job, praise your talents, your credentials, put you on the air the next day, and fire you the following the day — that’s like some kind of mean joke.”

James told Brietbart News last year that he was “shocked that my personal religious beliefs were not only the reason for Fox Sports’ firing me, but I was completely floored when I read stories quoting Fox Sports representatives essentially saying that people of faith are banned from working at Fox Sports. That is not right and surely someone made a terrible mistake.” He added that “I have worked in



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broadcasting for 24 years and have always treated my colleagues with respect and dignity regardless of their background or personal beliefs.... I have never discussed my faith while broadcasting and it has never been an issue until now.”

Appearing with Sasser on the *Washington Week* program, James emphasized the importance of holding Fox Sports accountable for its actions. “If we let this slide, it will have a chilling effect on other employees and the country,” he told Perkins. “And it would embolden employers who don’t like the belief of their employees, and they can just fire them. It can’t happen, and that’s why we’re fighting for this.”

Photo of Craig James: AP Images



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