



## Denver Airport Chick-fil-A Threatened by Pro-same-sex Marriage City Council

Employees and visitors at Denver International Airport (DIA) want a Chick-fil-A restaurant in the airport, but thanks to the power of “progressive” thinking, they may not get it. According to the [Denver Post](#), the Denver city council has put the “normally routine process” of approving an airport concession on hold for two weeks because of the Georgia-based chain’s owner’s opposition to same-sex “marriage.”



The council’s Business Development Committee met August 18 to consider an application by a business partnership to operate a Chick-fil-A franchise in DIA. No one was expecting any controversy, including assistant city attorney David Broadwell, who told the committee “he was caught off guard by” it, reported the *Post*.

A 2013 survey of airport users “identified Chick-fil-A as being the second-most sought-after quick service brand at the airport,” Neil Maxfield, senior vice president of concession, said. (First place went to Chipotle, which didn’t even apply at DIA.) It was simply assumed that the council would approve the application, especially considering the fact that the restaurant is expected to generate over \$616,000 in annual concession fees.

Instead, noted the *Post*, the process took “a rare political turn,” which is to say that politicians who are militantly pro-same-sex marriage hijacked the process for their own ends — namely, punishing a business that doesn’t toe the line.

Robin Kniech, the council’s first openly gay member, was also “first to raise Chick-fil-A’s leaders’ politics” during the meeting, the paper said.

“It has been the corporate philosophy [of Chick-fil-A] to use the dollars they earn to fund discriminatory lawsuits and to fund discriminatory political rhetoric,” Kniech said. “So that’s of concern to the extent that they will be forming profits from operating in our airport.”

“Constituents of mine, people who are very near and dear to me, have been fighting for their relationships to be recognized and for their rights to be equal,” new council member Jolon Clark said. “We can do better than this brand in Denver at our airport, in my estimation,” he added.

At issue are 2012 remarks by Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy in which he stated, “We are very much supportive of ... the biblical definition of the family unit,” along with the company’s contributions to organizations promoting traditional marriage and opposing same-sex marriage. Cathy has since said he regrets having injected the company into politics, and the chain’s contributions to certain organizations have been scaled back.

Cathy’s position, observed a Colorado Springs *Gazette* [editorial](#), was in fact far less strident than that of Barack Obama, who in his 2008 presidential campaign repeatedly stated his strong opposition to same-sex marriage, sometimes on the basis of his claimed Christian faith. Moreover, the 2008 Obama and



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2012 Cathy position on the subject were reflected in a voter-approved amendment to the Colorado constitution from 2006 until it was rendered null and void by the Supreme Court's *Obergefell* decision in June.

But now that the political winds have shifted, the champions of "tolerance" are refusing to tolerate any dissent, and so Chick-fil-A and its potential franchisees may well be refused a spot at DIA.

In a statement to [CNNMoney](#), the Denver city council said its city "has been at the forefront of honoring gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees and their families with non-discrimination clauses and partner benefits."

"When Denver International Airport proposed a concession with a company that had a history of funding opposition to this recognition, it was important that we as a City Council take a pause to ensure that all the policies are in place with all of the entities involved to ensure there will be no discrimination, and that benefits will be provided equally to all employees and their spouses, regardless of their sexual orientation," the council added.

Of course, as the *Gazette* pointed out, "the conflict [over the proposed concession] never involved claims of discrimination against gay customers or employees." Indeed, Mike De La Rosa, president of Denver's Delarosa Restaurant Concepts — one of the potential franchise partners, both of whom have operated other restaurants at DIA — assured the council that the franchisees would never discriminate. "We have a long history of diversity, all those kinds of things, between both companies. These would not be issues."

Still, council member Paul Lopez called the matter of the Chick-fil-A concession "really, truly a moral issue on the city."

"Lopez, with encouragement from fellow politicians, wants to control who participates in commerce by judging how a business owner's morality compares to his own," wrote the *Gazette*. "If he can do this, we might see Christian politicians block atheist business deals; Muslim politicians might not sign contracts or permits for Jewish CEOs. The possibilities seem endless."

Asked for comment on the situation, Chick-fil-A told Denver TV station [KMGH](#) in a statement:

Chick-fil-A is a restaurant company focused on serving great food and providing remarkable service to every single customer.

Chick-fil-A, Inc. and its franchised restaurant owners are equal opportunity employers, employing more than 75,000 individuals who represent many diverse viewpoints, opinions, backgrounds and beliefs.

We are humbled to be named to the 2015 "Top 10 Best Companies to Work For" list by 24/7 Wall Street and to be first in our category in customer satisfaction according to the 2015 American Customer Satisfaction Index.

All is not necessarily lost for the DIA Chick-fil-A franchise, however. Even if the committee ultimately rejects the application, a single council member could still introduce it in the full council. Sadly, that seems unlikely. According to the *Post*, "Ten of the 13 members attended [the] meeting, and none rose to defend Chick-fil-A, although some didn't weigh in."

There are also legal questions about denying the application on the basis of Cathy's views. City attorneys are expected to "brief the committee behind closed doors on legal considerations affecting the decision" at the next meeting, the *Post* said, referencing First Amendment issues. (Whether or not



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one agrees that the First Amendment applies to local governments, the Colorado constitution guarantees the same liberties.)

“Governments,” the *Gazette* declared, “have no authority to punish people for expressing their convictions.”

Nevertheless, the Denver Chick-fil-A case demonstrates clearly that the Left, once in power, won’t hesitate to claim such authority whenever it can be used to punish those who dissent from the progressive *zeitgeist*.



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