



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 6, 2015

African-American Pastors to Give Alabama Judge Moore Courage Award

Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore will receive the first “Letter From Birmingham Jail Courage Award” from the Coalition of African-American Pastors, the CAAP announced this week. The group plans to present to Moore the first of what is planned as an annual award sometime this spring, according to the announcement sent out on Wednesday. The award is named for civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.’s impassioned plea to fellow clergymen to stand united in opposition to segregation, written while he was jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963. CAAP announced the award would go to Moore the day after the Alabama Supreme Court ordered the state’s probate judges to stop issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, despite a federal court ruling declaring the state’s ban on same-sex “marriage” unconstitutional.

“Chief Justice Moore is an example for all of us,” CAAP president Reverend William Owens said in a statement included in the organization’s press release. “By making a principled and persuasive stand for marriage, Chief Justice Moore has singled himself out as someone who is ready to defend our most cherished values and help lead this new civil rights movement. By his words and courageous actions, he has helped preserve marriage, the family, justice, and the spirit of democracy. This is what it means to be a ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail Courage Award’ recipient. We hope that his example inspires others to take similar action to defend marriage in their own communities.”

The group’s stand puts them on the opposite side of the issue from the first African-American president, Barack Obama, after having previously said he believes marriage is a union of one man and one woman, announced in 2012 that he supported the right of same-sex couples to marry. Though surveys show African-Americans are overwhelmingly Democratic, polls have also consistently shown more opposition to same-sex marriage among black voters than among the general voting public and far more than among Democratic voters. While 31 states have voted against same-sex marriage in statewide referenda, it is now legal in 37 states, three of which adopted the change by popular vote. In the other states, legal recognition of same-sex marriage came either by judicial ruling or by vote of state legislatures.

In February U.S. District Court Judge Callie Granade ruled the state’s ban on same-sex marriage, a constitutional amendment adopted by the state’s voters, unconstitutional and later ordered Mobile’s probate judge to issue marriage licenses. In an [interview with AL.com](#), Moore said the ruling applied only to the plaintiffs in the litigation and to the judge in Mobile and that the federal judge lacked the

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authority to declare null and void an amendment to the state constitution. “A federal judge has no authority to overturn a state constitutional amendment in the face of a state court’s opinion on the same matter,” Moore said.

The controversial chief justice has been in conflict with federal courts before, most notably in 2003 when he refused to have removed from the state Supreme Court a monument to the Ten Commandments. Moore defied a federal appeals court ruling ordering the removal, claiming it was not an establishment of religion and arguing further that the First Amendment’s establishment clause is directed at the Congress of the United States (“Congress shall make no law”), not the Supreme Court of Alabama.

With the state facing a \$5,000 fine for each day the monument remained, the court’s other eight justices overruled Moore and had it removed. Alabama’s Court of the Judiciary issued a unanimous ruling that Moore had “violated the Alabama Canons of Judicial Ethics” and ordered his removal from office. He was elected chief justice again in 2012.

Moore told AL.Com he is proud that Alabama is the first state to take a stand against a federal court order requiring the legal recognition of same-sex marriage. “Not only are we the first state to do that, our motto is ‘We dare defend our rights’,” Moore said. “I can’t explain why more than 20 other states have bowed down to unlawful federal authority, but Alabama is not one of them.”



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