

Christian trustees reject law on defining gender

Risk losing millions in funds for stand against anti-discrimination rule

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Note from pastor Kevin: I praise God for the courage of these saints. If more of God's people don't become courageous in similar ways, then there won't be an America to raise our families in.

Three Christian members of a school board in Southern California have risked losing as much as \$40 million in state and federal funding for their district after taking a stand against an anti-discrimination law that allows students and school staff to define their own gender.

The trustees say they are willing to take the financial risk rather than compromise their morals, reported the Los Angeles Times.

"It's amazing how much we've eroded our society," Trustee Judy Ahrens, who describes herself as a devout Christian, told the paper. "Everyone always wants to fix things tomorrow. Well, I'm saying the time is ripe now. I might take a lot of heat for it today, but the rewards are going to be great in heaven."

The Westminster School District serves 10,000 students, grade K-8. The \$40 million in funding represents two-thirds of its annual budget.

The law in question mandates school districts protect transsexuals and those who "embrace unconventional gender roles" against discrimination, the Times reported.

The three trustees, a majority of the five-member board, say the law allows grade-school students and staff to immorally redefine their sexual identity.

According to the report, the trustees are opposed by the other two board members and school administrators.

"We do not see this as a moral issue," Trish Montgomery, a district spokeswoman, told the paper. "It is a matter of complying with the law."

In January, district personnel determined its discrimination rule didn't comply with a state law passed in 2000 that includes protection of students and staff based on "gender," defined as "a person's actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance or behavior."

Helena Rutkowski and Blossie Marquez-Woodcock are the other trustees standing with Ahrens.

"I can't, with a clear conscience ... vote for this trash," Marquez-Woodcock declared at an early February board meeting, the Times reported. At that meeting Marquez-Woodcock and her like-minded colleagues voted down the state's wording.

The California Department of Education then conducted a review and directed the district to approve the state language at an emergency meeting on Feb. 26. The board majority refused.

An April 12 deadline looms. If the board does not adopt the state wording by then, it opens itself up to formal complaints from anyone challenging the policy, as well as a lawsuit from the state and possible loss of funding.

"[The law is] totally anti-family," Ahrens told the paper. "It's not protecting the kids. If we include this identity-crisis language, looking down the road, we could be in some real trouble. ... If we have done this right, this will cause people to take a look at what's going on and ask why three brave women had to take a moral stand."

Ahrens said she fears complying with the state law would allow boys to become "peeping Toms" in girls' bathrooms and encourage cross-dressing. "The possibilities are endless," she said.

Carolyn Laub is executive director of the Gay/Straight Alliance Network.

"This is a district that is willing to discriminate on the basis of gender," Laub is quoted as saying. "That should be appalling to

everyone."

Board President James Reed indicated he is not confident the three trustees will change their minds before the April deadline.