

The *Hands On Originals* Case

Case Name: *Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission v. Hands On Originals*

Case Status: Kentucky Supreme Court has decided to hear the case, and the oral argument is set for August 23, 2019.

Significance: Whether the government can force a printer to create shirts with messages that violate his faith.



Background: Blaine Adamson is the managing owner of Hands On Originals, a Lexington-based promotional print shop. In 2012, Blaine declined to print shirts with a message promoting a local gay pride festival. Instead, Blaine offered to connect the requesting organization—the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization—to another printer that would create the shirts for the same price. Unsatisfied, GLSO filed a [complaint](#) with the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission and alleged illegal discrimination based on “sexual orientation.” Blaine did not decline GLSO’s request—nor has he ever declined an order—because of the prospective customer’s sexual orientation. Instead, like many other message-based denials, he declined this order because its message conflicted with his deeply held religious beliefs. Although a trial court and a court of appeals both ruled that Blaine did not discriminate and cannot be forced to print messages that conflict with his religious beliefs, the government appealed the case to the Kentucky Supreme Court, where it awaits a decision.

Key Points

- Blaine gladly serves everyone; he just doesn’t print all messages.
- People don’t surrender their freedom of speech when they choose to make a living by printing messages and creating artwork.
- Just because a printer communicates some messages doesn’t mean he has to print all messages.

Key Facts

- Blaine has declined many requests because of their messages, including shirts advertising a strip club, shirts with a violent message, and pens promoting a sexually explicit video.
- Blaine serves everyone, including LGBT customers. For example, Blaine has printed materials for a lesbian singer who performed at Lexington’s 2012 Pride Festival.
- Blaine wouldn’t print the message that the GLSO requested no matter who asked for it. The messages that Blaine prints, he prints for anyone. The messages that he doesn’t print, he won’t print for anyone.
- Blaine has [received public support](#) from lesbians who own a print shop in New Jersey.

Punishing Blaine for declining to print messages promoting the GLSO’s pride festival is like punishing:

- ...an LGBT printer for not creating shirts promoting a church’s rally for traditional marriage
- ... a Democratic speechwriter for not writing speeches for the Republican National Convention
- ...a Muslim singer for not singing Christian songs at a concert

The Bottom Line: The government shouldn’t punish Blaine for declining to print messages that he won’t print for anyone.