

TELEVISION QUARTERLY ISSUES-PROGRAMS REPORT

Station: WEAR-TV
Location: Pensacola, FL
Quarter ending: March 31, 2015

ISSUE/description: 8. GAY RIGHTS. Marriage rights, equal benefits, discrimination.

How Issue was treated (Program, PSA, etc.):

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time/Duration</u>	<u>Program type</u>	<u>Description</u>
1. Channel 3 News - Dayside	01/05/15	11:00AM/2 minutes	News	*

* In less than 24 hours-- same sex couples will be able to marry in Florida. Some Clerk of Courts' will open their offices early to accommodate the large crowds expected. In Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties the Clerk of Courts' say they will not extend office hours. All three counties will open at 8:00 am. Santa Rosa County's offices close at 4:30 pm. Escambia and Okaloosa County offices close at 5 pm. Reverend Doctor Jim Merritt says he will perform same-sex marriages tomorrow and many are looking forward to the legal benefits. Reverend Dr. Jim Merritt, "Many of the couples who marry here on Tuesday on Wednesday they will get health insurance for the first time. They will be able to get health insurance through their partners employers or they will be able to get access to other forms of insurance coverage. Many of them who will be here on Tuesday don't have insurance today." Clerks are also reminding in-state couples, that they have to wait three days after receiving a marriage license to have a ceremony. That's unless the couple has taken a pre-marital course or has approval from a county judge. All out-of-state same-sex couples can marry the same day they receive their Florida Marriage License. And as reminder both Santa Rosa and Okaloosa County Clerks of Courts, no longer perform marriage ceremonies. Escambia County's Clerk of Courts will.

2. Channel 3 News at 6PM	01/21/15	06:00PM/2 minutes	News	**
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** Same sex marriage became legal in Florida on January 6th but some couples are still having trouble getting the same benefits other couples receive. One couple is currently battling Escambia County to get health insurance. That was until Channel 3's Christina Leavenworth started digging for answers. Tammy and Adel Tomasek have been together for 22 years, and were married about a year ago in California. On January 6th, their marriage became legal in Florida. The first thing they were looking forward to was getting Tammy on Adel's health insurance plan she has through her job with the county. They filled out the paperwork, but they have been given no timeline on when she will actually get it. Escambia County says insurance benefits are immediately available to couples who were married in the past 30 days, but couples who got married in other states more than 30 days ago are stuck in the red tape. Since Tammy and Adel Tomasek got married in March, Tammy can't be added. The county says the 30 day life event change is Blue Cross Blue Shield's policy. They are working with them to change it. But Tammy feels the county has been putting up road blocks. She says they knew the law was changing and had plenty of time to prepare for it. We called Florida Blue to ask them about this. They told us the company has recognized same-sex marriage since the federal ruling in 2013. They then issued the statement making enrollment possible for Tammy. Quote "Any fully insured employer group that has not chosen to adopt expanded definition of a spouse to include same-sex legally married couples will be provided a one-time special enrollment opportunity for couples married prior to January 5, 2015 recognizing 1/5/15 as the special event date."

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3. 3 in the Morning	01/26/15	06:00AM/3 minutes	News	***

*** A federal judge has put a temporary hold on her decision that overturned Alabama's gay marriage ban, but indicated she will soon answer a key question: Must state probate judges issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples when the stay is lifted? U.S. District Judge Callie V. S. Granade on Sunday refused the Alabama attorney general's request to put her ruling on hold until the U.S. Supreme Court takes up the issue of gay marriage later this year. However, Granade did issue a 14-day stay to give the state time to ask the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for a lengthier delay. Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange called the delay a "step in the right direction" because it will allow the state time to prepare appellate arguments and perhaps settle questions about the effect of the ruling. Advocates of gay marriage rights expressed disappointment but were confident they would ultimately prevail. Granade said within the 14 days she will issue a separate order clarifying the effect of her ruling on those seeking and issuing marriage licenses across Alabama. Lawyers for the Mobile couple that brought the original suit requested the clarification after the Alabama Probate Judges' Association advised judges that they should not issue licenses to same-sex couples. The group maintained that ruling declaring the ban unconstitutional only applies to the parties in that case, and that it doesn't require judges to issue marriage licenses to other same-sex couples. Some judges disagreed with that view and indicated they were prepared to issue licenses on Monday.

4. Channel 3 News - Dayside	02/13/15	11:00AM/4 minutes	News	****
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**** Baldwin County and Escambia County, AL probate courts are now issuing marriage licenses on Friday. On Thursday, U.S. District Judge Callie Granade ruled that Mobile County had to order the licenses, signaling to probate judges statewide that they should follow suit. Some counties are still deciding whether to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Probate courts in at least two counties, Tuscaloosa and Lee, reversed course and began issuing gay marriage licenses Friday. Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore told state probate judges that the federal ruling didn't apply to them and that it was an intrusion on Alabama's sovereignty. Some judges refused to grant same-sex marriage licenses or to open licensing offices at all. The US Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments in April on whether the issue of same-sex marriage should be decided by individual states or if the 14th amendment means same-sex couples can marry anywhere in the U.S. Senators Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions of Alabama, along with Texas Senator Ted Cruz have re-introduced the State Marriage Defense Act. It would allow each state to adopt their own definition of marriage and block any influence by the federal government.

In a related story, the Southern Poverty Law Center filed a judicial ethics complaint against AL Chief Justice Roy Moore over his statements urging the governor and Alabama judges to defy federal law and enforce Alabama's ban on same-sex marriages. The complaint could recommend that Moore face ethics charges in the Alabama Court of the Judiciary. That court removed Moore from the office of chief justice 12 years ago after he refused to comply with a federal court order to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the state judicial building. SPLC President Richard Cohen: "As a private citizen, Moore is entitled to his views. But as the Chief Justice of Alabama, he has a responsibility to recognize the supremacy of federal law and to conform his conduct to the canons of judicial ethics." Moore vowed to stand with Gov. Robert Bentley to "stop judicial tyranny" following a federal judge's ruling in Mobile last week that overturned the ban.

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5. Channel 3 News at 6PM	03/03/15	06:00PM/2 minutes	News	*****

***** The Alabama Supreme Court handed down a ruling this evening, ordering a stop to the issuance of same-sex marriage licenses by probate judges. The order comes after the Elmore County's probate judge requested the state's Supreme Court for further guidance in regards to issuing licenses. In the ruling, the Supreme Court cites an effort to comply with Alabama law, which states marriage is between one man and one woman, as the reason to halt same-sex marriage licenses. Alabama's probate judges now have five days to file a letter stating why they should not be bound to the court's decision. The order today comes after a federal appeals court ruled last month against delaying the overturning of Alabama's gay-marriage ban, which U.S. District Judge Callie Granade called unconstitutional. State Attorney General Luther Strange responded to the appeals court ruling by asking the U.S. Supreme Court for a stay on the marriages until the high court took up the nationwide issue in the spring. Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, a vocal opponent of gay marriage, then ordered county probate judges to refuse marriage licenses to gay couples, despite Granade's having ruled that probate judges had a legal duty to issue the licenses. On Feb. 9, the U.S. Supreme Court opted not to halt the start of the issuance of same-sex marriage licenses in the state, but Moore said he would fight until the justices ruled.