

# **Speaker Mike Johnson, Who Has A Long History Of Anti-LGBTQ Activism, Called Opposing Counsel A Derogatory Anti-LGBTQ Term In A Courtroom While Defending A Ballot Initiative To Ban Same-Sex Marriage In The Louisiana Constitution**

## **Johnson Called An LGBTQ Opposing Counsel A Derogatory Term While He Attempted To Keep An Amendment To The Louisiana State Constitutional That Would Ban Same-Sex Marriage On The Ballot**

**In 2004, Gay Rights Activists Attempted to Block A Louisiana State Constitutional Amendment That Would Ban Same-Sex Marriage From Appearing On The Ballot.** “A Louisiana appeals court ruled Monday that a proposed amendment to the state constitution banning gay marriage should remain on the ballot, overturning a lower court ruling and sending the issue to the state Supreme Court. The ruling came in one of three lawsuits filed by gay activists to keep the amendment off the Sept. 18 ballot. John Rawls, a lawyer for the activists, said he planned to ask the state’s highest court to consider the three cases together.” [Law.com, [9/01/04](#)]

- **While Louisiana Already Banned Same-Sex Marriages, Proponents Of A Constitutional Amendment Believed It Was Necessary To Combat Legal Or Out-Of-State Challenges.** “Louisiana law already bans same-sex marriages. Backers contend the prohibition needs to be added to the state constitution to lessen chances it could be struck down by courts in or outside the state. The ban will go into the constitution if a majority of voters approves.” [Saturday State Times/Morning Advocate, 8/14/04]

**Attorney John Rawls Represented The Gay Rights Activists In Court.** “John Rawls, a lawyer for the activists, said he planned to ask the state’s highest court to consider the three cases together.” [Law.com, [9/01/04](#)]

**Mike Johnson, Then Affiliated With Alliance Defending Freedom, Which Was At The Time Known As Alliance Defense Fund, Intervened In Rawl’s Lawsuit To Keep The Constitutional Same-Sex Marriage Ban On The Ballot.** “Orleans Civil District Judge Pro Tempore Christopher Bruno, acting on a lawsuit filed Aug. 6 that contends the ballot measure violates the state Constitution, struck down the balloting - at least temporarily - Friday on the grounds that Sept. 18 is not a statewide election date. He did not rule on the constitutionality of the amendment itself. [...] Alliance Defense Fund attorney Mike Johnson, who intervened in the New Orleans lawsuit on behalf of the Louisiana Family Forum, the American Family Association of New Orleans and four state legislators who fought for the proposed amendment, told Bruno the ballot measure is not an “arbitrary, capricious or unreasonable” proposition.” [Saturday State Times/Morning Advocate, 8/14/04]

**Johnson Called Rawls “A Homosexual” While Awaiting A Judgement In The Courtroom, Which Rawls Considered A “Derogatory” Characterization Of His Sexuality.** “Tensions

flared in a New Orleans courtroom Friday after a hearing that was marked by civil debate on a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriages in Louisiana. As lawyers and reporters waited for Judge Chris Bruno to emerge from his chambers with a printed and signed judgment, John Rawls, a lawyer representing the Forum for Equality Political Action Committee, lost his temper. When Mike Johnson, a lawyer for the Alliance Defense Fund, which represents conservative politicians and 'pro-family' organizations, called Rawls a 'homosexual,' Rawls charged at Johnson. Rawls' voice rose and his face turned red, and he approached Johnson, pointed his finger at him and labeled him a 'homophobe.' 'I am not a homosexual,' Rawls angrily told Johnson. 'I am a gay man.' Rawls considers the term 'homosexual' derogatory." [Times-Picayune, 8/14/04]

**Rawls Accused Johnson Of Being A Homophobe For His Remark And Said "No One Calls Me The 'H' Word," Saying He Was A "Gay Man."** "Rawls' voice rose and his face turned red, and he approached Johnson, pointed his finger at him and labeled him a 'homophobe.' 'I am not a homosexual,' Rawls angrily told Johnson. 'I am a gay man.' Rawls considers the term 'homosexual' derogatory. 'No one calls me the 'h' word,' he said later." [Times-Picayune, 8/14/04]

## **Rep. Mike Johnson Repeatedly Fought LGBTQ Rights In Court**

**Johnson Twice Defended Louisiana's Same-Sex Marriage Ban Before The State's Supreme Court, In 2004 And 2014.** "Before taking office, Johnson worked as an attorney in the conservative Christian movement, representing organizations such as Freedom Guard and Alliance Defending Freedom. (Johnson has twice defended Louisiana's same-sex marriage ban before the state's Supreme Court, first in 2004 and again in 2014.)" [New Yorker, [12/15/20](#)]

- **Johnson Was Honored By The Family Research Council For His 2004 Defense Of The Ban.** "Today, the Family Research Council honored Mike Johnson, the Alliance Defense Fund attorney who argued and won the landmark case upholding the Louisiana Marriage Protection Amendment." [PR Newswire, 3/17/05]

**In 2007, Johnson Called The Employment Non-Discrimination Act, A Proposed Federal Law That Would Ban Anti-LGBTQ Employment Discrimination, An "Effort To Silence People Of Faith."** "In 2007, ADF attorney Mike Johnson said the group would oppose the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), the proposed federal law that would ban discrimination in employment based on LGBT status, even with broad religious exemptions, calling the bill an 'effort to silence people of faith' and an attack on free speech, religious liberty, and freedom of conscience." [People For The American Way, Accessed [10/25/23](#)]

**In 2003, Johnson Filed A Lawsuit To "Scuttle" New Orleans's Domestic Partner Registry And Benefits Coverage For Same-Sex Partners Of City Employees On Behalf Of ADF.** "Acting at the city's request, a national gay-rights defense organization joined New Orleans on Thursday in opposing a suit designed to scuttle the city's domestic partner registry and health coverage for gay partners of municipal employees [...] Representing the plaintiffs is Mike Johnson, a Shreveport lawyer affiliated with the Alliance Defense Fund, a Phoenix-based Christian law firm that has backed several such suits. When Johnson brought suit in July, he said the filing was 'not motivated out of hatred for homosexuals or anything like that,' but because he contended New Orleans was equating out-of-wedlock relationships with traditional marriage. 'A city can't decide what marriage is,' he said." [Times-Picayune, 8/15/03]

- **The Registry Existed For Same-Sex Partners To Make A Public Commitment To Each Other.** “In 1997, the City of New Orleans extended health insurance benefits to same-sex partners of city employees. In 1999, the City Council created a domestic partner registry that allows couples to make a public commitment to care for and support each other.” [Lambda Law, [Accessed 10/25/23](#)]
- **Johnson Claimed That “A City Can’t Decide What Marriage Is.”** When Johnson brought suit in July, he said the filing was “not motivated out of hatred for homosexuals or anything like that,” but because he contended New Orleans was equating out-of-wedlock relationships with traditional marriage. ‘A city can’t decide what marriage is,’ he said.” [Times-Picayune, 8/15/03]

## **Johnson Pushed For A Federal Same-Sex Marriage Ban**

**Johnson Pushed For A Federal Same-Sex Marriage Ban, Claiming That Leaving The Decision To The States Was A “Cop-Out.”** “Several churches have had or plan voter registration drives or petitions to encourage U.S. Sens. Mary Landrieu and John Breaux to vote for the federal amendment. Both senators oppose gay marriage but do not believe in a constitutional amendment preventing it. They say states should decide. ‘We are informing them that that’s a cop-out,’ said Mike Johnson of Alliance Defense Fund, a coalition of lawyers. He argues that the constitution requires states to recognize contracts of other states.” [The Times, 7/09/04]

## **Johnson Called LGBTQ Communities “Destructive,” Praised Anti-LGBTQ Activism For Fighting “Intimidation And Misinformation,” And Claimed Same-Sex Domestic Partnerships Were Counter To “Thousands Of Years Of History”**

**Johnson Defended An ADF-Organized Nationwide “Day Of Truth,” A Counter-Protest To The Pro-LGBTQ “Day Of Silence” Protest, Saying That Homosexuality Is “Both” “Sinful” And “Destructive.”** “Irrked by the success of the nationwide Day of Silence, which seeks to combat anti-gay bias in schools, conservative activists are launching a counter-event this week called the Day of Truth aimed at mobilizing students who believe homosexuality is sinful. [...] Mike Johnson, an Alliance Defense Fund attorney from Shreveport, La., said organizers were unsure how many students would participate in the Day of Truth, but expressed hope it would grow in coming years as more people learned about it. Johnson said the event is meant to be ‘peaceful and respectful,’ but made clear it is motivated by belief that homosexuality is wrong. ‘You can call it sinful or destructive — ultimately it’s both,’ he said.” [NBC News, [4/12/05](#)]

- **During The “Day Of Truth,” Activists Handed Out Pamphlets About The Inherent Sinfulness And Evil Of Being Gay.** “During the Day of Truth—the day after the Day of Silence—other students prove the need for a Day of Silence. These students wear t-shirts with the slogan ‘The Truth Cannot Be Silenced,’ and they pass out pamphlets about the inherent evils and sinfulness of the homosexual lifestyle. ‘If the other side is going to advance their point of view,’ said attorney Mike Johnson of the Alliance Defense Fund, the Christian group behind the Day of Truth, ‘it’s only fair for the Christian perspective to present their view, too.’” [Harvard Crimson, [4/25/05](#)]

**Johnson Said Anti-LGBTQ Activism In Public Schools Fights “Intimidation And Misinformation.”** “In a case decided last month, the organization's lawyers represented Heidi Zamecnik, 17, a senior at Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville, Ill., a suburb southwest of Chicago. Zamecnik wanted to wear a T-shirt that said BE HAPPY, NOT GAY on the day after students observed a Day of Silence in support of gay rights. The school said she could wear a shirt opposing homosexuality, but one with a less derogatory message like be happy, be straight. The ADF lawyers argued that the proposal violated Zamecnik's free-speech rights, but a federal judge disagreed. He ruled that the school's 'legitimate pedagogical interest' in 'promoting policies of tolerance' allowed it to restrict Zamecnik's speech to a positive message. Mike Johnson, an attorney for the ADF, criticizes the decision as illogical: 'Certainly the First Amendment has got to protect negative statements as well.' Johnson views ADF lawsuits as helping public schools, rectifying what he calls the 'intimidation and misinformation' that has made schools skittish about religion on campus. But the substantial cost that these and other suits impose on education has others deeply worried.” [Time, [5/10/07](#)]

**Johnson Said The Same-Sex Domestic Partnerhips Ran “Counter To Thousands Of Years Of History” And Was A Product Of “A Radical Homosexual Agenda.”** “Mike Irwin and John Burton got "married" in Shreveport - sort of. The civil union ceremony that was performed at the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church in 2001 made their relationship official in the eyes of family and friends. [...] ‘This court decree runs counter to thousands of years of history,’ said Johnson. ‘It's not a big surprise, but it is a sobering reality that the court wants to advance a radical homosexual agenda.’” [The Times, 2/05/04]

### **Johnson Said That The IRS’ Ban On Partisan Speech By Religious Institutions Was “Chilling” And A Form Of Intimidation**

**In 2008, ADF Recruited Religious Leaders To Openly Defy The IRS Policy That Bans Religious Nonprofits From Endorsing Political Candidates, In An Attempt To Bait The Agency Into A Legal Battle To Overturn The Policy.** Conservative legal advocates are recruiting pastors nationwide to defy an IRS ban on preaching about politicians, in a challenge they hope will abolish the restriction. The Alliance Defense Fund, based in Scottsdale, Ariz., will ask the clergy to deliver a sermon about specific candidates Sept. 28. If the action triggers an IRS investigation, the legal group will sue to overturn the federal rules, which were enacted in 1954. [Associated Press, [5/9/08](#)]

- **Johnson Said The IRS’ Policy Was “Chilling” And Led To “Intimidation And Disinformation.”** “It certainly does have a chilling effect,” said Mike Johnson, senior counsel for the fund. ‘I think that there is a lot of fear and intimidation and disinformation about the parameters that do exist.’ Johnson said about 100 pastors have expressed interest in participating so far.” [Associated Press, [5/9/08](#)]