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## **Attorney General Ken Paxton: Following High Court's Flawed Ruling, Next Fight is Religious Liberty**

AUSTIN – Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton today issued the following statement following the U.S. Supreme Court's flawed ruling on states' constitutional right to define marriage, stating the next fight is religious liberty:

“Today's ruling by five Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court marks a radical departure from countless generations of societal law and tradition. The impact of this opinion on our society and the familial fabric of our nation will be profound. Far from a victory for anyone, this is instead a dilution of marriage as a societal institution.

“What is most disturbing is the extent to which this opinion is yet another assault on the actual text of the U.S. Constitution and the rule of law itself. Just as *Roe v. Wade* ripped from the hands of the American people the issue of life and placed it in the judge-made ‘penumbras’ of the Constitution, so has this opinion made clear that our governing document – the protector of our liberties through representative government – can be molded to mean anything by unelected judges.

“But no court, no law, no rule, and no words will change the simple truth that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. Nothing will change the importance of a mother and a father to the raising of a child. And nothing will change our collective resolve that all Americans should be able to exercise their faith in their daily lives without infringement and harassment.

“We start by recognizing the primacy and importance of our first freedom – religious liberty. The truth is that the debate over the issue of marriage has increasingly devolved into personal and economic aggression against people of faith who have sought to live their lives consistent with their sincerely-held religious beliefs about marriage. In numerous incidents trumpeted and celebrated by a sympathetic media, progressives advocating the anti-traditional marriage agenda have used this issue to publicly mock, deride, and intimidate devout individuals for daring to believe differently than they do. This ruling will likely only embolden those who seek to punish people who take personal, moral stands based upon their conscience and the teachings of their religion.

“It is not acceptable that people of faith be exposed to such abuse. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects our religious liberty and shields people of faith from such persecution, but those aspects of its protections have been denigrated by radicals, echoed by the media and an increasingly-activist judiciary. Consistent with existing federal and state Religious Freedom Restoration Acts that should already protect religious liberty and prevent discrimination based on religion, we must work to ensure that the guarantees of the First Amendment, protecting freedom of religion, and its corollary freedom of conscience, are secure for all Americans.

“Our guiding principle should be to protect people who want to live, work and raise their families in accordance with their religious faith. We should ensure that people and businesses are not discriminated against by state and local governments based on a person’s religious beliefs, including discrimination against people of faith in the distribution of grants, licenses, certification or accreditation; we should prevent harassing lawsuits against people of faith, their businesses and religious organizations; we should protect non-profits and churches from state and local taxes if the federal government penalizes them by removing their 501(c)(3) status; and we should protect religious adoption and foster care organizations and the children and families they serve. Shortly, my office will be addressing questions about the religious liberties of clerks of court and justices of the peace.

“Displays of hate and intolerance against people of faith should be denounced by all people of good will and spark concern among anyone who believes in religious liberty and freedom for all.

“Despite this decision, I still have faith in America and the American people. We must be vigilant about our freedom and must use the democratic process to make sure America lives up to its promise as a land of freedom, religious tolerance and hope.”

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