



State of South Carolina Office of the Governor

NIKKI R. HALEY
GOVERNOR

1205 PENDLETON STREET
COLUMBIA 29201

March 18, 2016

Ms. Cornelia M. Humphries
451 Hillbrook Circle
Pacolet, South Carolina 29372

Dear Ms. Humphries,

Thank you for contacting our office with your thoughts on same-sex marriage and religious freedom in South Carolina. All across America, states have been passing laws on both sides of these issues, many of which have now been litigated in a court of law.

In South Carolina, the people have spoken on same-sex marriage. In 2006, 78 percent of voters passed a ballot referendum in favor of defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman, a provision that was embodied in Article 17, Section 15 of our State Constitution. Like the majority of South Carolinians, I believe marriage is a union between one man and one woman, and as governor, I did my duty to uphold the laws of our state defining marriage as such until a court of law struck down that ban.

As you may know, the recent opinion by the Supreme Court of the United States in *Obergefell v. Hodges* struck down bans, like ours, against same-sex marriage. Now, all states – including South Carolina – are required to license same-sex marriages and to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. As governor, I am sworn to uphold the Constitution and laws of this state, and regardless of my personal beliefs, I will continue to do so as the rule of law requires.

In South Carolina, our General Assembly has also spoken on religious freedom. In 1999, the legislature overwhelmingly and with bipartisan support passed the South Carolina Religious Freedom Act, making our state one of 20 states to pass a law that limits government from interfering with the faith practices of individuals and businesses. I believe that religious liberty is a foundational principle of our way of life, and I support an individual's right to believe and live according to their chosen faith.

Like many Americans, I recognize the balance between the Right to Free Exercise of Religion under the First Amendment and the Right to Equal Protection of the Laws under the Fourteenth Amendment – along with the courts' authority to strike down laws affecting those rights – as part of the beautiful design our nation's Constitution. We cannot forget that our constitutional framework is entirely dependent upon the quality of people serving in our seats of power. While we need good citizens to serve in government, we also need good citizens, like you, to be active outside of government – to stay informed, get involved, and use the power of their voice to hold public officials accountable.

Again, thank you for contacting me about these important issues. God bless.

My very best,

A blue ink signature of Nikki R. Haley, written in a cursive style.
Nikki R. Haley
NRH/jc

A blue ink signature of Cornelia M. Humphries, written in a cursive style.