



# Supreme Court rules in favor of baker who refused to make a same-sex wedding cake

The ruling, however, is very limited in its scope.

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David Mullins and Charlie Craig, the couple at the center of the Supreme Court's Masterpiece Cakeshop case. | Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

The US Supreme Court on Monday issued a narrow ruling in favor of Masterpiece Cakeshop, the bakery that refused service to a same-sex couple in Colorado.

The **7-2 ruling** written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, to which only Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg dissented, is very focused on the individual facts of this particular case, so it doesn't set much of a precedent for future similar cases. So despite losing in this particular instance, LGBTQ advocates have avoided a ruling that they feared could set a bad national standard for LGBTQ rights nationwide.

The decision by and large focused on what the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, which initially ruled against Masterpiece Cakeshop, got wrong. It highlighted the commission's allegedly unfair treatment of Jack Phillips, the owner of the bakery, and his religious beliefs.

The Court found, "As the record shows, some of the commissioners at the Commission's formal, public hearings endorsed the view that religious beliefs cannot legitimately be carried into the public sphere or commercial domain, disparaged Phillips' faith as despicable and characterized it as merely rhetorical, and compared his invocation of his sincerely held religious beliefs to defenses of slavery and the Holocaust. No commissioners objected to the comments."

The Court also argued that there seemed to be a bias in the state government in favor of same-sex marriages, pointing out, "The Commission ruled against Phillips in part on the theory that any message on the requested wedding cake would be attributed to the customer, not to the baker. Yet the [Colorado Civil Rights] Division did not address this point in any of the cases involving requests for cakes depicting anti-gay marriage symbolism."

In short, the Court found that while the state's interests in banning anti-LGBTQ discrimination "could have been weighed against Phillips' sincere religious objections in a way consistent with the requisite religious neutrality that must be strictly observed," the state commission did not do that, because it showed signs of hostility, in the Court's view, toward Phillips and his religious beliefs. So the state could, in theory, prevent discrimination like Phillips's, but it has to do it in a way that respects people's religious beliefs — which, the Court concluded, the commission did not do here.