

The *Arlene's Flowers* Case

Case Name: *State of Washington v. Arlene's Flowers* | *Ingersoll v. Arlene's Flowers*

Case Status: On June 25, 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated a ruling by the Washington State Supreme Court, sending the case back to the state.

Significance: Whether the state can punish a florist (including in her personal capacity) for declining to create floral arrangements to celebrate a same-sex wedding.



Hashtag: #StandWithBarronelle 

Background: Barronelle Stutzman, the sole owner of Arlene's Flowers in Richland, Washington, serves all customers; she simply declines to use her floral art to express messages or celebrate events that violate her deeply held beliefs. Barronelle had served Rob Ingersoll for nearly 10 years before telling in 2013 him that although she cares about him deeply, she could not in good conscience create floral arrangements celebrating his same-sex wedding. Barronelle referred Rob to three local floral artists she knew would do a good job. The two continued to chat about the ceremony, they hugged, and Ingersoll left. Acting without an official complaint, Washington's Attorney General Bob Ferguson began going after Barronelle shortly after the exchange between Barronelle and Rob. The Attorney General has been openly antagonistic toward Barronelle's religious beliefs about marriage—he not only went after her business, but sued her in her personal capacity as well. Rather than respecting her right to peacefully live out her faith, the government has targeted her because of her beliefs. The state has also applied its laws unevenly, choosing not to similarly pursue a coffee shop owner who profanely berated and expelled customers because of their Christian beliefs. If the government succeeds in punishing Barronelle, she stands to lose everything—her business, her home, and every penny she's saved over a lifetime.

On June 25, 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated the Washington Supreme Court's decision against Barronelle, instructing the state courts to reconsider her lawsuit in light of its decision in [Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission](#).

Top Line Messaging

- Barronelle serves all customers but doesn't celebrate all events or express all messages through her floral art.
- In *Masterpiece*, the Supreme Court made it clear that government hostility toward people of faith has no place in our society. The state of Washington was openly antagonistic toward Barronelle's religious beliefs about marriage—it not only went after her business, but sued her in her personal capacity as well.
- Tolerance and respect for good-faith differences of opinion about important issues like marriage are essential in a diverse society like ours. They enable us to peacefully coexist with each other.
- Washington must respect Barronelle's beliefs about marriage. If we want to have freedom for ourselves, we have to extend it to those with whom we disagree. Tolerance is a two-way street.

Key Facts

- Barronelle Stutzman served Rob Ingersoll for nearly a decade. She knew he identified as gay, and he knew she was a Christian. The two were friends. If Rob returned to Barronelle's shop today, she would serve him for another decade.
- Barronelle has been sued in her personal capacity. This case could take from her everything she owns.
- The Washington Attorney General chose not to prosecute a business that berated and discriminated against Christian customers. Instead, he has invested his time pursuing Barronelle and her business.

The Bottom Line: Views about important issues like marriage change. But the First Amendment's enduring promise is that people of good will are free to live out their beliefs free from government hostility or punishment. That is why you can support Barronelle's freedom no matter what you believe about marriage.