



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE

CINDY HYDE-SMITH  
COMMISSIONER

August 9, 2012

Statement from Cindy Hyde-Smith  
Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce

“In early July, my office received a request for a permit to utilize the Masonic Hall at the Mississippi Agriculture & Forestry Museum for a ceremony to memorialize the commitment between a same-sex, couple. I sought the legal advice from the Attorney General of the State of Mississippi, Jim Hood, as to the legality of this matter.

In late July, my office received a letter from Attorney General Hood advising that under Mississippi law, the application could not be refused. Based on my personal and religious beliefs, I strongly object to this, but I have no alternative, due to this advice, but to allow the processing of this permit to move forward. This process contains multiple steps and is currently not finalized.

For the record, my personal and religious beliefs are that marriage is defined as the union between a man and a woman. Our state constitution also defines marriage as only between a man and a woman, as was also upheld by 86% of Mississippians in 2004.

While this same-sex couple’s request for a permit to utilize one of our state’s facilities for a “commitment ceremony” is not being defined as a marriage ceremony, it is personally troubling for me. Furthermore, based on the legal advice from the Attorney General and the lack of clarity of state law regarding usage of state facilities for these kinds of activities, the legal grounds to deny this request were not found by the Attorney General because the ceremony is, not on its face a violation of state law.

However, if finalized, I will immediately begin working with other elected officials and the entire legislature to request clear and straightforward definitions about what activities can take place on the property owned by the State of Mississippi. I am hopeful that this matter can be put forth immediately when the Legislature convenes in January.”