

U.S.

Kim Davis Denied Him a Marriage License. He's Running to Replace Her.

By NIRAJ CHOKSHI DEC. 8, 2017

In 2015, David Ermold wanted a marriage license, but was denied by his county clerk, Kim Davis. Now he wants her job.

Two years after Ms. Davis brought national attention to her corner of northeast Kentucky by refusing to issue licenses to gay couples, in defiance of the Supreme Court, Mr. Ermold says it is time for new leadership.

"I believe that the leaders of our community should put the needs of their constituents first and should be an example of integrity and fairness," he said in a Facebook post on Wednesday announcing his candidacy for Rowan County clerk.

He has received a great deal of attention since then. He appeared on MSNBC on Thursday, Ellen DeGeneres described him as "awesome" on Twitter, and the comedian Patton Oswalt asked how he could help.



David Ermold
@DErmold

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While his campaign website makes no direct mention of Ms. Davis, it does state that the time has come to “restore responsible leadership” to the position she holds.

In June 2015, the Supreme Court issued its ruling guaranteeing same-sex marriage rights nationwide, and Ms. Davis and some other clerks throughout the country refused to comply on religious grounds.

On Sept. 1 of that year, Mr. Ermold, his partner and another gay couple walked into Ms. Davis’s office followed by a throng of reporters and protesters. There, they engaged in a testy exchange with Ms. Davis.

“Under whose authority are you not issuing licenses?” Mr. Ermold asked.

“Under God’s authority,” she said.

Ms. Davis made her case in court and spent several nights in jail for ignoring a judge’s orders. She was ultimately set free when a judge ordered her deputies to issue licenses without her approval.

Ms. Davis had taken office that January, succeeding her mother, who had served in the role for 37 years. She ran as a Democrat, but switched parties shortly after the fracas. The state eventually dropped the names of county clerks from marriage licenses, as Ms. Davis requested.

Mr. Ermold, who has since married his partner, filed his paperwork to run to Ms. Davis herself on Wednesday, according to The Associated Press, which described the encounter as cordial. When all was said and done, they shook hands and Ms. Davis said, “May the best candidate win.”

Mr. Ermold has lived in Morehead, Ky., for 14 years, according to his campaign biography. He earned two master’s degrees from Morehead State University and is an English professor at the University of Pikeville.

If elected, he plans to “restore professional leadership, fairness and responsibility to the office,” he said on the website.

Neither Mr. Ermold nor Ms. Davis could be reached for comment.

While Mr. Ermold may have garnered the most attention of any contender for Ms. Davis’s job, at least three others have filed to run against her, according to The Associated Press.

A version of this article appears in print on December 10, 2017, on Page A24 of the New York edition with the headline: For Hopeful, Clerk Race In Kentucky Is Personal.