

**Acts of Faith**

# Kim Davis denied his right to marry another man. Now David Ermold is going to run against her.

---

By **Eli Rosenberg** December 6

A Kentucky man who was denied a license to marry his male partner by county Clerk Kim Davis in 2015 has announced that he is challenging her for her seat next year.

David Ermold and his now-husband, David Moore, were among the same-sex couples denied a license by Davis in defiance of a Supreme Court decision. Davis, the chief clerk of Rowan County, cited “God’s authority” and said her stance was motivated by her beliefs as an Apostolic Christian.

On Wednesday, Ermold filed in Morehead, the county seat, to run for the position — to “restore the confidence of the people” in the office.

“I think we need to deal with the circumstances and the consequences of what happened,” Ermold 43, an English professor at the University of Pikeville and the leader of the local gay rights organization Morehead Pride, told the Associated Press. “I don’t think the other candidates are looking at a larger message. I have an obligation here, really, to do this and to set things right.”

“My commitment to Rowan County is to restore professional leadership, fairness and responsibility to the clerk’s office,” Ermold said.

Davis was jailed briefly for defying a judge’s order to begin issuing licenses, drawing nationwide coverage and galvanizing a debate about religious freedom. Davis said she would refuse to allow any of her employees to issue the licenses, as well, though the standoff was eventually resolved when one of her deputies, Brian Mason, began to do so anyway.

Davis’s attorney, Mat Staver, attacked Ermold as a novice who would have “no idea how to run a clerk’s office.”

“The clerk’s position is more than a single-issue position, and that’s all David has is one issue,” Staver told the AP. “Much of what the clerk does has nothing to do with wedding licenses. It’s a broad service to the public.”

According to the [Lexington Herald Leader](#), Ermold will join a crowded field. At least three other Democrats have lined up to challenge Davis, who changed her registration from Democrat to Republican after the uproar over her decision. Davis has said that she will run for reelection for the office she has held since 2014, the newspaper reported.

Davis's mother was the previous clerk, and Davis's son works in the clerk's office, as well. Ermold said he believes that, too, is a problem.

"The county clerk's office has been in the hands of the same family for almost 35 years," he told the newspaper. "I think there's the potential they want to keep it in the family. But everyone should have a fair shot; it should not be something that's handed down from mother to daughter and from daughter to son."

Ermold and Moore were married in October 2015 in the county. Rowan is a conservative county in a conservative state: About 58 percent of its residents voted for Donald Trump in the presidential election. Only two counties in Kentucky — those encompassing its two biggest cities, Louisville and Lexington — voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016. But local officials in Rowan County have typically been Democrats, the AP noted.

Davis, meanwhile, has become a hero for many on the religious right. Earlier this year, she reportedly traveled to Romania to lobby the country to outlaw same-sex marriage.


**Read more:**

[A Florida mayor stole a dead woman's identity to use a handicapped parking spot, police say](#)

[This giant snake is three times your size — and why you should just avoid the Everglades](#)

[‘Armageddon’: Apocalyptic images show the devastation caused by Southern California fires](#)

 **206 Comments**

Eli Rosenberg is a reporter on the Washington Post's General Assignment team. He can be reached at [eli.rosenberg@washpost.com](mailto:eli.rosenberg@washpost.com)  Follow @emrosenberg



