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South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson

South Carolina May Have to Reimburse LGBT Nonprofits for Marriage Lawsuit

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In a strange twist, South Carolina's antigay attorney general may wind up having to pay more than \$150,000 to a coalition of LGBT nonprofits.

Groups including Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and S.C. Equality Coalition have spent tens of thousands of dollars to protect marriage equality in the state, thanks to Attorney General Alan Wilson's ongoing fight to prevent gay and lesbian couples from marrying. Even though marriage equality has been the law of the land in South Carolina since November, Wilson is continuing an appeal that has virtually no chance of success.

Wilson, a Republican, has long expressed opposition to marriage equality, claiming that the state's ban "upholds the unique status of traditional marriage." But in 2012, Wilson attended the nontraditional Cayman Islands commitment ceremony for Florida's twice-divorced, antigay attorney general Pam Bondi.

Because South Carolina continues to drag out the litigation, the legal bill is likely to go much higher. Federal law permits winning parties in civil rights cases to seek repayment from the state. No other states in the Fourth Circuit (which includes Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland) have continued to fight marriage litigation at this point.

For his part, Wilson has not disclosed how much he has spent defending the unconstitutional, voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage. It's possible that taxpayers could be on the hook for tens of thousands of dollars in payments to state attorneys, on top of the fees paid out to the plaintiffs' counsel.

Ultimately, legal marriage for same-sex couples is expected to bring in \$1.8 million in tax revenue for the state over the next three years, according to new research from The Williams Institute. It's also expected to generate \$24.8 million in spending, and to generate 248 jobs. Hopefully, some of that revenue will help to cover Wilson's pointless and costly litigation.