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Utah State Tax Commission Approves Personalized License Plates with Gay-Positive Messages

SALT LAKE CITY--In a win for free speech, the Utah State Tax Commission has ruled that it will approve three personalized license plates with gay-positive messages. The ruling is a first for the commission, which, until this decision, had never approved a personalized plate containing the word "gay."

In December, Elizabeth Solomon applied for three personalized license plates: "GAY WE GO," "GAYS R OK," and "GAY RYTS." After the Tax Commission approved the "GAY WE GO" plate but denied the application for the latter two plates, the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah represented Solomon in appealing the decision.

"I have kids who are gay and I wanted these plates so that I could publicly express support for my children," said Solomon, explaining why she applied for the personalized plates. "I'm delighted that I will now be able to do so."

Margaret Plane, ACLU of Utah staff attorney, was also pleased by the Tax Commission's decision. "Too often, public officials are scared by the word 'gay' and they refuse to recognize that gays and lesbians are an increasingly public and positive part of our communities," said Plane. "The commission rightly recognized that their own rules don't allow them to censor gay-positive messages like Mrs. Solomon's."

Solomon will now be able to put any of the personalized license plates on the cars she owns. "I want other drivers to read my plates and think about their gay relatives, neighbors, and peers; to quote my favorite button, 'Someone you care about is lesbian or gay,'" she said.

A result of the decision is that personalized plates with gay-positive messages are now clearly permissible, so long as the requested plates do not violate any statutory or regulatory restrictions.

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