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# **As Jacksonville ends courthouse ceremonies, same-sex marriages boost wedding industry**

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Despite Clerk of Courts Ronnie Fussell ending all courthouse weddings to avoid marrying same-sex couples, Jacksonville residents turned up outside the Duval County Courthouse early Tuesday morning to get marriage licenses – or get married by one of the officiators at the scene.

The decision by the clerk of courts presented an opportunity for businesses like That Wedding Lady, run by [Rachel Smith McMurray](#), an officiator who specializes in same-sex commitment ceremonies and, now, weddings.

McMurray performed the ceremony for the first couple to get married outside of the courthouse on Tuesday, Garlyn and [Timm Purcell](#). She expects a major boost to her business, with both existing clients and clients from in and out of state.

"I've had massive interest. My phone has been ringing off the hook – from existing clients and new clients," McMurray said.

McMurray promised all clients for whom she performed a commitment service that she would marry them when same-sex marriage became legal in the state.

Among those at the scene Tuesday were [Sarah Katz](#) and [Stella Lacey](#), one of the first couples to emerge from the courthouse with a marriage license. The two, both longtime Jacksonville residents, were discouraged by Fussell's decision.

"It was disappointing and disheartening. As taxpayers, we feel that we should have the right to use that room because that's where our money is going," Katz said. "The fact that because, in my personal opinion, the clerk of courts doesn't agree with same-sex marriage and so he is stopping all courthouse weddings is brash and uncalled for."

The couple says that ending courthouse weddings has a broad impact and will discourage LGBT individuals, as well as businesses and business owners, from moving into the city.

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