

# Gay-Conversion Therapy Ban Survives as Supreme Court Rejects Appeal

by Greg Stohr

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Robert Oliver and Mark Heller (R) hold hands, draped in flags, as they celebrate the Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage on June 26, 2015 in West Hollywood, California. Photo by David McNew/Getty Images

The U.S. Supreme Court let stand a California law that bans licensed therapists from working with children to change their sexual orientation from gay to straight, rejecting an appeal that said the measure violates religious rights.

The rebuff leaves intact a federal appeals court decision upholding California's 2012 first-of-its-kind law. The measure prohibits the form of counseling known as "conversion therapy."

The ban was challenged by three people, led by licensed therapist and minister Donald Welch, who said it interferes with their right to practice their religious beliefs.

California officials urged the Supreme Court not to hear the appeal, saying the law doesn't restrict what religious leaders can say, except in the context of a state-licensed therapy session.

The law applies to licensed doctors, psychologists, family therapists and social workers, and it subjects violators to discipline by state licensing bodies. The law lets licensed providers refer minors to religious leaders.

The case is *Welch v. Brown*, 16-845.