



## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

Contact: Sharon Ross  
(901) 684-5485  
sross@crelaw.org

### **Forcing Words: CRE Files Amicus Brief Asking State High Court to Free (Up) Speech**

**Phoenix, Arizona** — September 28, 2018. Today, the Center for Religious Expression (CRE), filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the Arizona Supreme Court, requesting the Court hear an important case concerning the right of Christian artists to decline to write words and messages that violate their conscience.

Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski own and operate Brush and Nib Studio, an art studio that creates and sells custom artwork including hand-painting, hand-lettering, and calligraphy. Using their artistic talents and creativity, they select and design words and messages that uniquely celebrate the special events for which they are commissioned, such as weddings. They gladly offer their services and sell to any person, but they do not want to promote messages that contradict their faith. As a result, they cannot produce messages promoting same-sex marriage.

This position has placed them in the crosshairs of the City of Phoenix, which considers their decision to follow conscience a crime. The City says Joanna and Breanna must write words that say God blesses same-sex marriage since they have said God blesses opposite-sex marriage – or else face fines and jail time. State courts have thus far treated Joanna's and Breanna's words as conduct, failing to recognize their right to control their own speech. Indeed, the Court of Appeals held words cease to be speech altogether in this context.

Joanna and Breanna are now petitioning the Arizona Supreme Court to rectify this misguided – and dangerous – reasoning. CRE's amicus brief asks the state's high court to accept the petition, pointing out that writing words are always speech, and the First Amendment does not tolerate Phoenix's flagrant attempt to compel artists to write or paint ideological messages they oppose. The Court of Appeals' decision radically departs from First Amendment precedent, and threatens to condemn all who do not verbally endorse the new orthodoxy.

Center for Religious Expression is a servant-oriented, non-profit 501(c)(3) Christian legal organization dedicated to the glory of God and the religious freedom of His people. For more information, visit <http://www.crelaw.org>.