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Judge allows ACLU intervention in Catholic Charities lawsuit

A Sangamon County judge has allowed the American Civil Liberties Union to intervene in a lawsuit brought against the state by Catholic Charities in four dioceses.

Judge John Schmidt on Aug. 1 allowed the ACLU's claim that the organization is acting to protect children in the care of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, according to a previously established federal consent decree.

Catholic Charities in the dioceses of Joliet, Peoria and Springfield sued the state over implementation of the June 1 civil unions law, asking that the religious organizations be allowed to refer to DCFS civil union couples seeking to become foster or adoptive parents. Catholic Social Services of Southern Illinois in the Belleville diocese later joined the suit.

The ACLU claims the Catholic organizations' policy harms children. Also joining the ACLU's motion to intervene is a civil union couple from Champaign. Sarah Riddle and Katherine Weseman said in court documents they hope to become foster care and adoptive parents in the future.

Schmidt last month issued a temporary injunction, keeping current policies, contracts and children in place, after DCFS notified Catholic Charities their contracts would not be renewed for the new fiscal year beginning July 1.

Schmidt will hear arguments in the case on Aug. 17.