

PRESS RELEASE

To: Press, Jacksonville (Duval County) Florida
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Date: March 05, 2016
Subject: Recent statements by Miami investor Jeff Morr



Following City Council's February 18, 2016 withdrawal of a special LGBT rights ordinance, Miami real estate investor Jeff Morr stated that he would withhold future local investments until such a law is passed.

Several Jacksonville area news outlets reported the story. To give context to the report **Defend Jax Families** has analyzed the case and offers the following assessment.

Jeff Morr, an acknowledged gay entrepreneur, threatens to [forego future Jacksonville investments](#) until Jacksonville enacts a LGBT preferential rights ordinance.

However, he omits from his rationale the fact that the law is unnecessary.

Jacksonville is a welcoming city to all people. The alleged bigotry is simply not present. Claims of intolerance are disproved by Jacksonville's unrivaled LGBT population, which is greater per capita, [according to Gallup](#), than any other Florida city, and [greater than cities which adopted](#) special LGBT rights.

In 2015, before the ordinance was an issue, Mr Morr made his first local acquisition, followed by others, declaring ["people are very welcoming here"](#). He, like numerous investors, chose Jacksonville when there was no LGBT ordinance, confirming that the law's absence has no bearing on where he invests.

Just a week before his threat, Mr Morr [brought investors to Jacksonville](#) to trumpet its advantages. Both investors and the LGBT community are drawn to Jacksonville by the exceptional features that make the City great: Opportunity, climate, environment, culture, low taxes and low cost of living.

There's a myth that the local economy is weakened when LGBT laws are absent. The opposite has been the case. [Jacksonville Business Journal reports](#) that, in the 12 months following rejection of the [same law in 2012](#), Jacksonville saw *"the greatest economic improvement in the entire country, boasts one of the top 20 economies"* and became the ["strongest in Florida"](#).

And, there's an oft-repeated hoax – that employers avoid Jacksonville because it lacks a LGBT ordinance. That's Mr Morr's claim. However, his economic extortion has a political goal – to coerce a law. Except, his underlying complaint is disproved by his recent investments and investor initiatives; both demonstrate satisfaction with the City's cultural and economic climates.

UNF's Jim Crooks revived the hoax in a recent [Times-Union letter](#), claiming a large employer had bypassed Jacksonville due to the LGBT issue. Pressed to name the employer, he said: *"I believe it (the name) was . . . mentioned [in 2012]."* He wouldn't tolerate such evasive hearsay from his students.

Councilman Aaron Bowman repeated the hoax in a [Times-Union essay](#). Asked to name the company, he insisted *“I’m not at liberty to say”*. He had another opportunity during the [February 4 City Council meeting](#)¹, but instead confessed: *“The companies won’t tell us”*.

Finally, this expansive law imperils business survival and Personal Conscience, and requires Free Speech control. And, the 15-employee exemption is usually nullified; most businesses will be regulated as *“public accommodations”*. Legal defense against one complaint will exceed \$20,000, excluding fines, complainant legal fees and criminal prosecution.

The official victim alone determines when an actionable offense has occurred; protected is every mannerism, gesture, appearance, action, language and attire which he deems *“gender expression”*.

The appeasing of economic extortion will only encourage more – Mr Morr’s scheme is a preview of the unjustified coercion to be inflicted on business if this law is enacted.

An appeasing law will certainly endanger businesses – to fix a grievance that is untrue.

There is no community-wide intolerance. Foremost LGBT demographer [Gary Gates](#) confirms that Jacksonville is alluring without such laws: *“There’s little or no evidence that same-sex couples consider LGBT laws in deciding where to move”*, [adding](#): *“Their [migration] patterns look like the broader patterns [of everyone else] in the U.S. They’re moving south and west”*. *“States reporting the biggest increases in same-sex couples . . . are among the most socially-conservative states in the nation.”*

More information is available [here](#).

¹ Mr Bowman’s statement appears at the 1:38:20 elapsed hour.