

ACLJ Files Lawsuit Against Second Federal Institution, National Archives, for Targeting Pro-Life Speech

WASHINGTON , DC, USA, February 9, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Earlier this week, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) [filed a federal lawsuit](#) (Civil Case No. 23-cv-365) in defense of [a group of Christian students and parents](#) who were kicked out of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum for wearing hats with a religious, pro-life message on them. Last night, the ACLJ filed [another federal lawsuit](#) in defense of the freedoms of speech and religion – this time against the National Archives.

The National Archives Museum – another federally funded national museum in Washington, D.C. – targeted and censored its religious, pro-life visitors on January 20, 2023 – the day of the 50th Annual National March for Life. What is so egregious about this particular targeting is that it was done by the very federal institution that is home to our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, and the Bill of Rights – the exact documents that call on our government to protect the freedoms of speech and religion, not trample on them.

The ACLJ is now representing four clients who were a part of three separate groups and visited the National Archives at three



separate times on January 20th. All of the clients were told by National Archives employees that they had to take off their religious, pro-life apparel or leave the museum.

When one of the clients questioned the order, a National Archives security officer said that the apparel would “incite others” and that she was “disturbing peace.” Yet another one of the clients was told that her T-shirt was “offensive” and had to be covered up or removed. Her shirt read simply, “MARCH 4 LIFE 2014: Saint Cecilia’s Youth Group, Glen Carbon, IL.” Perhaps most disturbing of all were the National Archives security officers who instructed a whole group of Catholic students and chaperones to remove or cover up ALL their religious and pro-life clothing while standing in the same room as the Constitution of the United States. As we detail in our complaint:

[The security officer] made other classmates standing near Plaintiff remove their pro-life hats. One such hat contained the inscription, “LIFE always WINS.” Another hat contained the inscription, “ProLife.” Plaintiff witnessed another guard participate in these instructions to her classmates and at no time did any of the other guards in the Rotunda intercede and provide contrary instruction. Plaintiff, astonished by [the security officer’s] instructions – given her close proximity to the very documents that prohibit the government’s interference with her First Amendment right to free speech and expression and her free exercise of religion – nonetheless zipped up her jacket and removed her button for fear that she would be thrown out of the National Archives if she did not comply. Plaintiff immediately believed her constitutional rights were being violated by the very government officials tasked with protecting them.

To make matters worse, while the clients were being harassed for their pro-life attire, they “observed at least two other National Archives visitors, a man and a woman, freely walking around while wearing what appeared to be ‘pro-choice’ apparel, with statements to the effect of ‘My Body, My Choice,’ and ‘Pro-Choice.’” Treating religious pro-life speech differently than opposing speech is blatantly unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination.

Jordan Sekulow, ACLJ’s Executive Director, says: “Earlier this week, the ACLJ put the National Archives on notice of our representation of clients in this matter, and last night we filed our complaint in the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia, alleging violations of the First Amendment (free speech), Fifth Amendment (equal protection), and Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Just as we are fighting back against what happened to the group of Christian students at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, we’re fighting this unconstitutional discrimination at the National Archives.”

The ACLJ is asking the court to declare the National Archives’ actions unlawful and unconstitutional and order that they be prohibited from ever taking such action again. Specifically, the ACLJ requested that the court declare that the Defendants’ actions violated their clients’ rights as protected under the First and Fifth Amendments, that it also declare that the Defendants’ actions violated the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and that the court prohibit the Defendants from unlawfully targeting their clients again by issuing an injunction. The ACLJ

has also asked the court to review any retraining to ensure that the way these federal entities train their staff ensures compliance with the First Amendment.

Adds Sekulow: "What occurred is not only an injustice, it is intolerable, and we aren't going to let them get away with it. We intend to find out what's behind this targeted discrimination. The fact that there were multiple instances of targeted discrimination in at least two federal buildings on the same day against pro-life advocates is no coincidence. Where there were two, there are likely more. We will not stop until we get to the bottom of this, achieve justice for our clients, and ensure that this never happens again. No one should be targeted by the federal government for their Christian and pro-life views."

Read the full complaint here:

http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Complaint_Tamara_R_v_National_Archives_Redacted.pdf

About ACLJ: The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), focusing on the preservation and defense of constitutional rights, is based in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit <https://aclj.org>.

Brian Mayes
Nashville Publicity Group
+1 615-771-2040

[email us here](#)

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