



Oakland City Officials Continue to Target Pro-Life Advocate at Abortion Centers

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December 15, 2008

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Oakland, CA (LifeNews.com) -- City officials in Oakland continue to target a local pro-life advocate who carries a helpful message to the women going to local abortion centers. The city enacted a new law limiting free speech outside abortion centers that appeared to be directed at Walter Hoye, a black pastor.

Hoye says the new law is an unconstitutional infringement on free speech and he was charged under it earlier this year.

At a pre-trial readiness hearing in Oakland Superior Court on Friday, the Alameda County district attorney demanded that Rev. Hoye plead guilty to one misdemeanor count and agree to stay away from local abortion centers for an unspecified period of time in exchange for dismissing three other criminal charges against him.

Hoye refused and will go to trial next week, Hoye's attorney, Mike Millen of the Life Legal Defense Fund, tells LifeNews.com.

Hoye, who is African-American, feels a special calling to work for the end of the high number of abortions taking place in the black community.

As part of his efforts, he stands in front of an abortion business in Oakland with leaflets about abortion alternatives and a sign offering help for women.

Millen says the "clinic escorts" are upset by Hoye's presence and they surround him to impede his movement, block his sign with large sheets of blank cardboard, and make raucous noise to drown out his quiet offers of assistance.

Because their actions didn't deter Hoye, the Oakland city council approved the new law, which prohibits contact within eight feet of women entering abortion businesses without their consent.

The penalty for illegally approaching a person to talk or hand out a leaflet is one year in jail and/or a \$2,000 fine.

In May, Hoye was arrested for allegedly violating the ordinance.

One of the witnesses against him was an Oakland city attorney who was secretly watching from a car and appeared to have worked in cooperation with the abortion center, Millen explains.

The district attorney then expanded the complaint to include four counts, two for "unlawful" approaches and two for allegedly using "force, threat of force, or physical obstruction" against two of the clinic escorts.

At a pre-trial hearing in July, Hoye's LLDF attorneys cross-examined these "victims."

The escorts admitted that Hoye never used force against them, threatened them, or blocked them. They proudly testified that they routinely block Hoye to prevent women from seeing his sign. Nevertheless, the district attorney has not dismissed the charges against him.

"The district attorney's office appears to be using these trumped-up charges as leverage to pressure Rev. Hoyer into giving up his free speech rights," Millen said. "The threat of four years in jail is a potent one, but my client is more interested in getting the truth out, both on the sidewalk and in the courtroom."

Hoyer will be back in court on Friday and a trial date will be set in the case.

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